

**ESSAYS OF THE YEAR**  
**(1931-1932)**

# ESSAYS OF THE YEAR

1931 - 1932



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## COMPILER'S NOTE

**T**HIS volume, like its predecessors, is compiled, and, to some extent, arranged, with the idea of being read with pleasure by intelligent persons, either continuously (which is why there is a loose sort of arrangement of subjects), or at intervals. The pieces collected in it, except Mr Chesterton's scrutiny of the word "essay," "occurred," as the botanists like to say, casually—mostly in the periodical Press of 1931-1932—and contain ideas which had struck the writers "upon several occasions"—upon occasions of fact or fancy, of philosophical meditation or even mere public excitement. Such occasions most readers share, each after his kind, but do not always put into the form of a literary statement. It is hoped that the general non-topical thoughts which arose thus in particular circumstances have a more lasting interest and retain a freshness longer than is always possible to them on their first appearance. No attempt at a strict standard of academic choice has been

vi . . . . . COMPILER'S NOTE  
made. The authors are assembled simply as  
"essaying" to comment upon life in a manner  
not wholly transitory.

F. J. HARVEY DARTON.

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The thanks of the Argonaut Press are due to the Authors, and to the Editors and Publishers of the periodicals mentioned, for permission to use the essays in this volume

The introductory paper, *THE ESSAY*, was written without reference to the collection itself, for which Mr. G. K. Chesterton is in no way responsible



## THE ESSAY

By G K Chesterton

THE essay is the only literary form which confesses, in its very name, that the rash act known as writing is really a leap in the dark. When men try to write a tragedy, they do not call the tragedy a try-on. Those who have toiled through the twelve books of an epic, writing it with their own hands, have seldom pretended that they have merely tossed off an epic as an experiment. But an essay, by its very name as well as its very nature, really is a try-on and really is an experiment. A man does not really write an essay. He does really essay to write an essay.

One result is that, while there are many famous essays, there is fortunately no model essay. The perfect essay has never been written, for the simple reason that the essay has never really been written. Men have tried to write something, to find out what it was supposed to be. In this respect the essay is a typically modern product, and is full of the future

and the praise of experiment and adventure. In other words, like the whole of modern civilization, it does not know what it is trying to find; and therefore does not find it.

It occurs to me here, by the way, that all this applies chiefly to English essayists; and indeed that in this sense the essay is rather an English thing. So far as I remember, English schoolmasters tell a boy to write an essay, but French schoolmasters tell a boy to write a theme. The word theme has a horrid suggestion of relevancy and coherence. The theme is only too near to the thesis. The English schoolmaster profoundly understands his pupils when he assumes that they will not produce a theme but an essay at a theme, or a considerably wild cockshy or pot-shot at a theme. Mr. P. G. Wodehouse (the works of whose imagination do not fall strictly within either the tragic or the epic form) has described how the benevolent nobleman, burdened with a son of the name of Freddie, appealed to that youth to behave, if possible, like a sane and rational human being; to which Freddie replied, with a solemn fervour: "I'll have a jolly good stab at it, Governor." The essayist should be the reasonable human being; the philosopher, the sage with a judgment at once delicate and

detached; the thinker considering a theme, the logician expounding a thesis. But England, expecting every man to do his duty, does not expect so much as all this. England knows that her beloved essayists will not be reasonable human beings, but will only have a jolly good stab at it. It is something of a symbol that, for the English schoolboy, an essay is an effort. The whole atmosphere of the thing is full of doubt, experiment and effort. I know not if it is hell, or heaven, or perhaps merely a piece of earth that is for ever England, but anyhow all this field is paved with bad essays and good intentions.

Of course there are essays that are really themes and themes that are really theses. They represent what may be called the Extreme Right of rigid right reason and militant purpose, after the Latin model. A model of the militant or controversial essay (and all the more so because there is no mailed fist, but a very iron hand in a very velvet glove) is Alice Meynell's essay in defence of the despised wife of Dr. Johnson. The words are spoken in the softest accent of irony, the mere style preserves all the stylist's special pose of gliding over things easily, but the whole thing is constructed controversially; it is as argumentative

as any argument in any law court or debating club. It is also very effective argument, for, until it was written, nearly everybody talked exactly that nonsense about poor Mrs. Johnson; and nobody I know of has talked it since. This theme really is a thesis: but when the same writer turns, let us say, to describing in the same elegant English the mere effect of blue twilight glowing in the cracks of the London streets, she is at most concerned with a theme. Even here a certain Latin logic in her made her stick to the theme. We all know, however, that there are English essays that are very English essays and yet very jolly essays; that are none the less beautiful because they twist and ramble like an English road. Of these are some of Thackeray's *Roundabout Papers* and some of Mr. Belloc's best essays; like that highly unscrupulous dissertation which promises to deal with a particular feature of seventeenth century architecture, proceeds to argue with itself about the respective ages of Charles the Second and Louis the Fourteenth, amplifies itself into a glowing panorama of the landscapes of the Pyrenees, and ends with a Rebuke to His Pen, chiding it for having taken him so far away from the mere title and topic of his essay. People are so prone to say that Mr. Bel-

loc is French that it is worth noting that in this and many other matters he is extraordinarily English. By the true test of literary consistency and conscientiousness, there was much more that was French about Mrs Meynell. Or perhaps it might be maintained that something of Latin lucidity, which leads the former writer to value the strict form of the sonnet, in itself enables him to perceive the essential formlessness of the essay. Anyhow, except when it is tightened by the militant relevancy of debate or propaganda, the essay does tend to be formless, or at the best to present a very bewildering variety of forms. But I cannot help thinking a man must be as English as Mr Belloc to enjoy it in its most formless form.

This indefinite and indeterminate quality would at once appear if we tried to classify the subordinate type under the general type of the essay. *The types are so many and the tests are so few.* There is one kind of essay that consists of staring out of the window at the garden and describing what you see there, but from this I am inhibited by a complete ignorance of the names of all the plants that I see. I have sometimes wondered whether it would be possible to disguise my ignorance under an appearance of abstruse or specialized or purely

localized knowledge, as by saying: "That torrid and almost terrible blossom which is called in Persia the Blood of Kings," or: "The shrub which, in spite of its new scientific name, I still love to call *Judæus Esuriens*, as did the dear old naturalists of the later seventeenth century," or: "The little flower that we in Westmoreland have always called Bishop's Buttonhook, though they have another name for it in the South." It is obvious that the same bright and rather breathless enterprise might be applied to another sort of essay; the rambling historical and archæological causerie, in which one name leads to another; and generally to very little else. Would it be safe to begin a paragraph: "I was dipping into Dio Cassius the other day . . ." or to go on: "To find a parallel to this, I imagine we should have to go as far afield as the second period of the Upanishads," and perhaps conclude: "But after all, is not all this to be found in Scotus Erigena?" Very few people have read Dio Cassius or Erigena; and it may be doubted if even the aged Theosophists, who can still be found stranded in drawing-rooms, could pass an examination in the Eastern documents I have named. If done as a skit, it would be a successful skit; for certainly it would expose

many before it was itself exposed. If done as the foundation for a solid career of learning, it would be unwise, for though only two people in the world knew it was nonsense, those two would certainly turn up. This covers an excellent sort of essay, the solemn slut, such is Mr Gilbert Norwood's immortal fancy called *Too Many Books*. Then there is another sort of essay that has lately become fairly common and frequently quite picturesque that may be called the Historical Glimpse. It will be devoted to describing a day with Moses or an afternoon call on Mahomet or Marat, or a chance meeting with Nero or Mr Gladstone. The special technique developed for this design generally involves the detailed description of the hero before he is introduced by name, and it ends with "Fear not, you carry Cæsar," or "You may be interested to know that you have given a glass of milk to Prince Albert." All these are bold and promising essays at the elusive nature of the essay; but in itself it remains somewhat elusive. And, if I may end this rambling article on the subject of rambling articles, and end it with a personal confession, I will own that I am haunted with a faint suspicion that the essay will probably become rather more cogent and dogmatic, merely be-

cause of the deep and deadly divisions which ethical and economic problems may force upon us. But let us hope there will always be a place for the essay that is really an essay. It is an old story that soldiers sing songs round the camp-fire; but I doubt if they are all about soldiering. Indeed they are sometimes so lively in their range over other topics, that respectable patriots have found a difficulty in including them in collections of patriotic songs. St. Thomas Aquinas, with his usual common sense, said that neither the active nor the contemplative life could be lived without relaxations, in the form of jokes and games. The drama or the epic might be called the active life of literature; the sonnet or the ode the contemplative life. The essay is the joke.



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## ESSAYS OF THE YEAR

## WRITERS

By E M Delafield

WRITERS, especially writers of fiction, are, unfortunately, rather unpopular with their fellow-creatures. They are suspected, usually quite justly, of "putting people into their books." And the people who are put never see themselves in quite the light in which the author has seen them, and feel that not enough has been made of such interesting material.

Writers, however, have their own trials. Unknown people write them letters, sometimes complimentary, but often quite the reverse, and very often containing the most singular questions, such as "Cannot you, who seem to know so much about human nature, tell me how to prevent my husband from falling in love with women younger and prettier than myself?"

Or:

"Won't you, who have evidently had such wonderful luck, tell me how to make editors accept the stories that I send them?"

How difficult to reply to these inquiries. Besides, the thing of all others, curiously enough, that authors dread and dislike, is having to write a letter. They have enough writing to do, they feel, without anything of that sort.

Another thing that friends, correspondents, even distant cousins of acquaintances met five years ago by chance at Tintern Abbey, and complete strangers, never hesitate to do, is to send manuscripts—written with their heart's blood—for professional criticism.

"I want you to be *perfectly* honest," they say passionately. "Don't spare me. Tell me exactly what you really think."

But does one?

It need scarcely be said that one does not. One spends, on the contrary, hours and hours trying to evolve a formula that shall combine the minimum of truth with the maximum of kindness.

There are, indeed, authors who do not do this. They tell the simple truth: which is usually to the effect that the manuscript is five times too long—or, alternatively, too short—untrue to life in every respect, devoid of humour, written in faulty English, and wholly lacking in any literary merit whatsoever. Or

they return the whole thing, unread, through the medium of a secretary

Most authors, however, cannot possibly afford secretaries. They struggle with a typewriter or pencils and pads, or—in extreme cases—the last leaf of the washing-book

It is often thought that people who write, especially women, lead immoral lives. If so, it is really just as well, for they are not at all fitted for domesticity, and this is well known to men, who, therefore, seldom ask women writers to marry them. But since the most remunerative topic in the whole world of fiction is love, it would never do for a woman writer to let it be understood that she is inexperienced in the matter. So there is nothing for it but to have the most widely-advertised *affaires de cœur*, and as many of them as possible. In the case of men writers, this is much less important, although nobody can say why

Sometimes authors are asked. "Do tell me *how* you write your books." The answer to this is not (as might be supposed): "Sitting at a table, with a typewriter or/and a fountain-pen."

It is much more complicated and varied.

"At an old Queen Anne walnut bureau that

my dear grandfather always used, in the tower-room of my tiny cottage on the moors."

Or:

"North Dakota is the only place where I can find the right atmosphere, so I have had to build myself a rustic hut out there."

"Anywhere—anywhere in the world—so long as I can get *absolute* quiet, *complete* solitude, and an endless supply of Russian cigarettes and Turkish coffee."

Ordinary people prefer authors to answer in this way, and apparently believe them. Their fellow-authors do not, knowing only too well that writing is usually done on the corner of the dining-room table when breakfast has been cleared away and lunch hasn't yet been laid.

Another aspect of the question that might well be touched upon, is the delicate matter of the relations between authors and publishers. (In many cases, of course, this is confined to an earnest, deeply-considered letter and a heavy MS. on one side, and a rather heartless printed slip, and the same MS. sent back again, on the other. But we are not dealing with that type of author at the moment.)

Most publishers in England are quite kind, but rather impersonal. They do not by any means attach the same desperate importance to

every word of a book that the author does. On the actual day of publication they behave just as usual, and nothing short of the most sensational sales will shake them from their calm.

American publishers are very different. They send expensive, encouraging cablegrams, and long letters signed "very cordially" and generally give one to understand that authors are as important as anybody else.

Literary agents are, of course, well known to authors. Their life is a very hard one, and really requires an article all to itself, because authors, although so talented, are extraordinarily tiresome, unbusinesslike, capricious, touchy, unreliable and difficult to deal with. Literary agents only get a wretched ten per cent out of each transaction, and very likely have to spend the whole of that on postage stamps.

It is always rather risky to introduce writers to one another. Each begins by saying: "I've always admired your work so tremendously"; but after that, it is all very apt to degenerate into a contest as to which of them shall talk most about his own works, past, present, and future. This, however, probably applies to other people as well as to authors.

The most difficult kind of author is the

author who writes, but hasn't published. They adduce many reasons to account for this fact—which usually only transpires after a time, and under pressure—but in reality, there is only one reason, and it is a very sound one.

## THE BOTTLE

*By Ivor Brown*

IN February, when the germ is on the wing, all God's chillun get chills, and every family tends to be a Bottle Party. Father, who smokes too much, has his cough mixture, and mother, who works and worries too much, has her tonic, and the children have their various vessels of sticky restorative or supposedly invigorating fluid. Dessert spoons are in high demand after meals. And there is much spilling and dribbling and pulling of faces and demand for compensating chocolate. Perhaps we are all the better for it. It is a dark mystery. If you swig the stuff and feel no whit enlivened, it may be true that you would have been almost dead without it. In any case, the bottles, whose dark waters have usually dripped on to the label, are a dreadful and depressing spectacle, the contents may have hygienic merits, but the external suggestion is disastrous. The old-fashioned doctor regarded health without a bottle as an impos-



sible achievement at this season of the year, but the closer our modern craft of medicine approaches to psychology the less emphasis will there be on the tot of physic. A family parade of bottles is squalid enough to give the vitality a perceptible knock. The sight of a tonic may undo all the actual good which the tonic itself internally performs.

The medicine bottle is, I suppose, a utilitarian article. It is flat and conveniently packed and easily handled. But here utility does not march with beauty; the medicine bottle is a mean object and looks deplorable on any shelf. The stubby little funnel at the top of the flat, oblong body deprives it of any dignity, and it is surely a pity that we cannot relieve our chests, as we sometimes relieve our thirsts, from flasks and carafes which are encouraging to look upon. It is curious that the chemist should have treated us to such drab vessels, for his profession has been a great conservator of beauty in its utensils. The great "carboys" in his window, the symbolic urns of magic with their load of coloured water, are gracious additions to the landscape of the urban street; inside, on his shelves, are the glass "rounds" containing the drugs; these are beautifully proportioned, and the Roman letter-

ing of the black-and-bronze labels is a perfect touch. One gets a sense of steady scholarship, no quackery could find refuge amid such furniture, the chemist who abandons these lovely jars traditional to his calling and fills his shop with the garish packages and showcards of proprietary salves will never get a regular custom from me.

Is it a symptom of the faddy, pernickety mind to be thus influenced by the containing vessel? When I see the materials of alchemy thus ranged on a well-equipped shelf, like veteran volumes of the eighteenth century on parade, my confidence abounds. Such bottles, I feel, must have a kindly genie, approved by the experience of man and the passage of time. But when the powders within have been ground and mixed and infused, and the consequent liquor is turned into one of those mean little medicine bottles, my faith withers. The bottle imp no longer appeals to me as a powerful and protecting daemon, he is just a taste in the mouth, and not, as a rule, a pleasant one.

But medicines, to do them justice, do not seem to be quite so nasty as they used to be. Like very few other things in this world of to-day, they tend to get better. It may be, of course, that the maturer palate is more tolerant

of astringent herbs than the childish mouth. Or perhaps the art of the dispenser has become more humane, so that he mitigates of set purpose the harsher flavours of his ingredients by imposing some remedial addition. It was a particularly silly habit, which I hope a wiser psychology of the nursery has abolished, always to discuss medicine as if it were essentially and incurably loathsome to the palate. "Nasty" was the eternal adjective, and childhood would shrewdly play up to the motions of nastiness and of swallowing as a grim ordeal in order to receive the following comfort of a sweetmeat.

The discipline of the bottle fitted in pretty well with nineteenth-century ideas of improvement. The stuff had to be nasty; otherwise it could not possibly be good for the patient. Those who study *The History of the Fairchild Family* (1818) will understand this curious philosophy. Master Henry, aged six, had to repeat: "I know that in me—that is, in my flesh—dwelleth no good thing." Papa used to observe, quoting Proverbs: "Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest with the rod, he shall not die." The authoress of *The Fairchild Family*, Mrs. Sherwood, also wrote *The Infant's Progress from the Valley of Destruction to Everlasting Glory*; she brought

up five children and three adopted orphans. One wonders whether Mr. Barrett of Wimpole Street handed the works of Mrs. Sherwood to his daughter Elizabeth before he took to dosing her with the pints of stout which she so much detested.

The bottle, whether of stout or of chemist's medicine, had plainly to be a punitive business in such an atmosphere. Little Henry was born in sin, and the old remedy was to whack the devil out of him. As with the spirit, so with the flesh. The devil of the latter could only be purged by suffering. The painful blessing of physic was the carnal parallel to the spiritual instruction in the gloomier portions of the Bible. Let us hope that this attitude to the bottle has been dissipated by the humanity and common sense of the modern nursery, but it lingered on during the Puritan decline, and the conjunction of the words "nasty" and "medicine" remained dismally and remarkably constant. Does the child of to-day have to eat powders on a biscuit smeared with jam? It was a truly horrible compost. Let us hope that he or she is more often treated according to the advertisers' slogan that "Ice-cream is good for you." One can scarcely imagine Mr. Fairchild contemplating the ailing form of little Henry

and escorting him with a smile to the Soda Fountain and stuffing him with To-day's Special Sundae. But it might have done Master Henry a deal of good.

Well, there the bottles are, and they still have, for the majority of the nation, the authority of magic. It is said that most people who go to a doctor are disappointed if they are dismissed with good advice only. They want "a bottle," and he will be a poor tactician of the surgery who sends them empty away. If that be so, I am in the minority. I do not want a bottle. If I must be fortified with iron, let me be pricked and injected with the stuff. Or let me eat a tablet of some puissant kind. But that row of bottles, mean of shape and smeared about the lip and label, is only an incitement to melancholy. I become hypochondriac at a glimpse of them. Besides, they are such a nuisance about the house. In the dining-room disgusting, in the bedroom a nuisance, in the bathroom forgotten. Perhaps the bathroom-shelf is the best. If the happy man is he who has just enough work to neglect, the healthy man may likewise be the fellow who has just enough medicine to forget.

## THE FILM FACE

By St. John Ervine

MISS MADELINE CARROLL, who is beautiful and young and intelligent, lately told the members of the Critics' Circle during their annual luncheon that it was no longer necessary for a person who is eager to be a film star to be beautiful and young. And I inferred from what she said that it is not now a disadvantage to be able to act. I could see hope leaping into the hearts of some of her elderly listeners, but I fear that the hope will be delusive, for only that morning a film manufacturer, as if he had had prevision of what Miss Carroll would say in her speech, flatly contradicted her statement in some remarks which he made to me. I need not remind my readers that many authoritative persons insist that a film star ought not to be able to act, although, in opposition to that assertion, I would add that the most successful film stars in recent years have been exceptionally able actors and actresses, such as Mr

George Arliss and Miss Marie Dressler, old stagers who are unanimously acclaimed by film fans. I am inclined to believe that the theory that film stars ought not to be able to act is mere highbrow flim-flam, "literary stuff," as impatient persons call it, and has no relevance to actual affairs. Miss Carroll, at all events, does not hold it and is proving, by the steady increase of her own talent, that she understands the traffic of the stage and is competent to engage in it. That is one thing, however; the question of youth and beauty is another; and here, I suspect, Miss Carroll is not speaking by the book when she asserts that these qualifications are no longer essential to success on the screen. She, of course, has no need to worry, for heaven has been bounteous to her. She has the "blown feature of youth," as Ophelia called it. But what about those whose features may, disrespectfully, be described as flyblown? Is Miss Carroll not unwarrantably raising their hopes when she begs them to believe that their talent for miming, if they have any, will excuse them in the eyes of film magnates, for their lack of looks and their possession of years? My friend, the manufacturer of films, thinks not. He assured me that seventy-five per cent. of the profits made on moving pictures are earned in

the provinces—the West End, apparently, does not seriously count, except for the purposes of advertisement—and provincial film fans will not look kindly upon raddled faces, even when they are assured that their owners are famous and magnificent actresses. The young lady whose face has not been lined by a single thought is still the rage in the provincial cinema, I was told. The great heart of the suburbs and the outer cities is moved by the empty expression. The pretty nitwit still rules the roost.

The lengths to which film stars must go to obtain this duntily-vacuous appearance are remarkable, and I am told that a thriving trade is done by manipulative surgeons who chop and cut and mould and mince the features to an extent that would have daunted Dr Moreau on his island, as described by Mr H G Wells, and might even be considered to be startling in that *Brave New World*, the super-mechanised Utopia, which Mr Aldous Huxley, with horrible brilliance, portrays. Fabulous tales have been told to me of the way in which intelligent women attempt to make themselves look unintelligent in the hope that they will win the affection of film fans, who, it seems, admire fatuity, provided that it is pretty, and are de-



lighted to see silliness adorned. The fact that Miss Carroll, who is a Bachelor of Arts of Birmingham University, has transferred her talents from the screen to the stage may fairly be said to support the argument of those who insist that pretty noodles are more popular in the pictures than intelligent women, even when they are as lovely as Miss Carroll. Anyhow, it is reported that young ladies who aspire to be film stars take lessons from eminent professors in the business of seeming to be vacant, and the manipulative surgeons are having the time of their lives in carving their faces to an unnatural smoothness. The fierce light that beats upon a throne is a rushlight in comparison with the fierce arc-lamps that flash upon the film star, and if there is a blemish of any sort upon her face, be it almost imperceptible to the naked eye, the camera will catch and magnify it, especially if the picture be a close-up. Facial defects that may be quite charming, in fact, become monstrous in a movie. Features, if they are to please photographers and film fans, must be very, very smooth, and if surgeons and "make-up" men, between them, cannot compose a lady's face into a pretty picture, then the lady must abandon hope of screen renown. That is, I think, unfortunate,

for a smooth, unlined face can only be possessed by a person on whom life has left no mark; a person, that is to say, who is insensitive and shallow and empty. The unwrinkled brow has never been agitated by an idea or a thought. The cheeks which bear no blemish are more proper to the inhabitants of Madame Tussaud's establishment than to human beings. If our film fans cannot be persuaded to admire an actress who betrays signs of intelligence, we may despair of our population, since the major part of it increasingly entertains itself in the cinema.

This demand of the provincial film fan—I am assuming that he makes it—for unlined faces and preternaturally youthful expressions is saddening, for it denotes a taste for artifice which is not wholesome. Mr Webster, in his admirable *Dictionary*, is illuminating on the subject of prettiness. On the whole, he leaves his enraptured readers, among whom I include myself, in an ill-humour with the word *pretty*, for although it means "pleasing by delicacy or grace," it also means "attracting, but not striking or impressive; exciting pleasure and liking rather than admiration and awe; having slight or diminutive beauty, neat or elegant without elevation or grandeur." The word has other

meanings even less alluring. The authors of that nice work, *The New English Dictionary*, are no less scornful than Mr. Webster of the pretty, and when they wish to express extreme contempt for a thing they describe it as pretty-pretty. The lexicographers, indeed, put the pretty out of pleasure with themselves. What, then, are we to think of our provincial population which, the authorities inform us, will not look at anything but the pretty and are accustoming themselves to regard as great artists persons who have no intelligence or have had their features so altered by face specialists and manipulative surgeons that they appear not to be intelligent? When I hear, with mingled awe and wonder, how ladies are maintained in a lineless look by pomades and pummelling, I marvel at the fatuous fortitude which human beings can display. The hours they spend, dear beauty specialist, with thee would have caused compunction to come into the heart of Torquemada—I am not now referring to my distinguished colleague on the staff of *The Observer*—had they been spent with him. Such tortures as these slaves of the screen have to endure while they are plastered with cement and baked in ovens or hacked on operating tables are enough to melt a heart of

stone. What are we to think of the mob which accepts this distortion as a substitute for beauty? How can we hope for any serious development of the moving picture when its devotees demand that it shall falsify life and put a gloss on all appearance?

Perhaps, however, I am excessively perturbing myself about the pictures. If there be any health in them, they cannot continue to pervert facts or to re-arrange reality—they must begin to accept life on its own terms. When the well-meaning but humourless woman asserted that she accepted the universe, Carlyle grimly remarked "By God, she'd better!" and the film fans, if they are to fortify themselves for the adventure of life, had better learn to take the marks of thought and experience as tokens of greater value than the pretty signs of thoughtless and insensitive existence. "Insensitive" is the important word. A smooth, unlined face on an adult denotes that its owner is as little sensitive as a piece of reinforced concrete, as unresponsive as a rock. Experience cannot mark such a person because he or she has either lost or never had any power of feeling. *Such men and women are not people—they are appetites, and the only fear of being marked which they may feel is that they may*

some day wear the signs of self-indulgence. Yet, in spite of all this effort to keep the film face unmarked by any evidence of experience and thought, the fact becomes increasingly apparent that only those film actors and actresses who conform to the laws of life everywhere are able to impress themselves upon the general mind. It is not the pretty little pieces who remain in the memory. Why should they remain in any memory? What is there to remember about them except their vapidty? And who wishes to recollect that?

The life of a film star, I have been told, is three pictures. That is why persons, such as myself, who do not regularly frequent cinemas, are ignorant even of the names of young women who suddenly appear "in lights." They disappear from the screen as quickly as they come on to it. They are too old at thirty. When I apologetically informed a man of the entertainment world that I had had to ask some friends who Miss Jeannette MacDonald might be, he replied that he was not astonished by my ignorance. Pointing to a group of photographs of young ladies which was published in the "pictures" part of a popular newspaper, he said: "I've never heard of any of them!" Yet they are "starred." Many

film actors and actresses, he assured me, decline to be "starred," because the "star's" career is now a brief one. They prefer a longer, if less eminent, life. This is especially true of the pretty little empty-headed piece. When the public has seen her insignificantly-pretty features two or three times, its desire to see them again ceases. Her career is ended. In a year or two the girl is forgotten. No one remembers her name. Her face cannot be visualized. When I had written thus far, I looked around my room. On one wall hangs a portrait of Henry Irving. On another, a portrait of Sarah Bernhardt. Above a bureau which stands against a third wall is a picture of Eleanore Duse. None of these, so far as I know, was ever filmed\*. Yet they clearly remain in the memory of multitudes who were profoundly moved by their acting, and their faces are extraordinarily individual in look, lined by high feeling and intense thought and wide experience. Every day I look at the sombre face of Duse and am stirred by her beauty and the rarity of spirit which is plainly visible in her features. Some said that she was

\* I have been told, since the first publication of this essay in *The Observer*, that Bernhardt, in her old age, appeared in a film of no great quality.

not beautiful, but they were blind or obtuse. When I look at her fine, flexible face, I think to myself what a great film actress she would have made. But it seems that she would not, for her face had not been smoothed and ironed and plastered with pomades and pummelled by masseurs and manipulated by surgeons until all expression had vanished from it. She moved continents in her life by merely appearing upon the stage. As she slipped from the wings of the theatre every eye sought for her and would not leave her. What film fan, gawk-eyed at a smooth, pretty little piece, will be able, years after the pretty piece has lost her looks or is dead, to recollect her with the high pleasure with which the present ancient buffer recalls the lovely face of Duse? And that is the true moral of Miss Madeleine Carroll's speech. For how can any art, even if its title to be called an art is disputed, hope to increase its authority if it deals only in the evanescent and the trivial, and cannot be related to the permanent ambitions and desires and feelings of mankind? Until the cinema produces its Duse it cannot hope to grow out of the toy stage.

# THE NATURE OF DRAMATIC ILLUSION

*By Charles Morgan*

WHOLVER traces the rather meagre history of dramatic criticism from Greek times to our own will observe that it has taken two principal forms—the analytic and the impressionistic. The analyst's purpose has been to lay down rules and establish universal standards of judgment, the impressionist's, to set up no god but his own taste and to write a history of the voyage of his soul among masterpieces. The value of his criticism has thus depended upon the value of his soul, always an uncertain factor, and though writing of this school, when practised by men of quality, has yielded great treasures, the liberty, the artist's privilege necessary to impressionistic criticism has been shamefully abused, and is nowadays too often made an excuse for arrogant and disorderly variations on the pronoun "I." There is, in modern criticism, a real danger of anarchy if its erratic



movements cannot by some means be related and stabilized. With every development of dramatic technique and every departure from classical structure, the need increases of a new discussion which, observing the changes of definition since Dryden and the vast accumulation of material since Lessing, shall establish for the stage not indeed a formal rule but an æsthetic discipline, elastic, reasoned, and acceptable to it in modern circumstances.

It is my purpose, then, to discover the principle from which such a discipline might arise. This principle I call the principle of illusion.

Before attempting a more precise and technical definition of illusion, I will strive to give a general impression of it and to show that the idea is a necessary foundation of criticism.

There has been in recent years a tendency among serious critics to revolt against what they call the literary criticism of plays. Drama, they say, is a composite art, and to criticize it as though it were the work of the dramatist alone is unreasonable and unjust. With this statement of their case we may all agree, but they have gone much further. Wishing to depose the dramatist from an exaggerated pre-eminence, they have attempted to establish another monarch in his place; and they differ

in their choice of a successor. Mr. Gordon Craig's emphasis is all on the designer of scenery and costume, Mr. Ashley Dukes, though a dramatist himself, writes unblushingly of the producer as the Artist in Chief, and they have powerful supporters, for the appearance in Europe of stage artists of genius—men of the quality of Stanislavsky, Reinhardt and Craig himself—has drawn eager and worshipping eyes to the producer's share in the theatrical collaboration. This kind of enthusiasm, though we may not share it, is useful if we examine its psychological origins. What is the genuine need underlying this modern critical revolt against the dramatist? What is the genuine need which prompted the Americans to invent—as I am now inventing—a new critical term? I call mine "illusion" and struggle to define it, the Americans call theirs "theatre." Unfortunately the true meaning of the American word "theatre" has been blunted by common usage. When they say now that a play is "good theatre" or "bad theatre," they mean that it has punch or is tediously lacking in it—in brief that it is, or is not, vigorously theatrical, and they are able to declare that, though a piece has no genuine critical value, it is, for all that, good theatre.

But what lay at the root of this American word was, I am sure, a desire to find a critical term which should express the unity of a stage representation, the same spiritual unity which made the productionists revolt against the dramatist's pre-eminence.

This unity, this essence of the drama, which I call illusion, is not the same with the Aristotelian unities of action, time and place, though in plays that accept the Aristotelian form they are included in it. It is, perhaps, best thought of as being to the drama what the soul is to the mind, and those who deny, or say that they cannot perceive, a distinction between soul and mind and will not therefore concede the real existence of the soul, will certainly refuse to recognize the real existence of illusion.

I will not press the comparison, which is intended to be illustrative and no more. What I am certain of is that every playgoer has been made aware now and then of the existence in the theatre of a supreme unity, a mysterious power, a transcendent and urgent illusion, which, so to speak, floats above the stage action and above the spectator, not merely delighting and instructing him, as Dryden says, or purging his Aristotelian emotions, but endowing

him with a vision, a sense of translation and ecstasy, alien to his common knowledge of himself. The hope of this illusion is the excitement, and the experience of it the highest reward, of playgoing. Strangely enough, we become conscious of its approach, as though there were a sound of wings in the air—before the play begins. The curtain is still down, the house-lights are still up, but we are in a theatre and, if experience has not embittered us, are dreaming that this evening or another evening the beat of wings will grow louder in our silences, the supreme illusion will stoop down and gather us, the hosts will speak. Again and again we are disappointed. The curtain rises and the play is found to be an ugly bag of tricks; instead of the authentic currency of experience we are given a trickle of counterfeit coin, rubbed for generations between the fingers of plagiarists. But now and then a persistent playgoer's hope, or a part of it, is fulfilled. The order of his experience is always the same—a shock, and after the shock an inward stillness, and from that stillness an influence emerging, which transmutes him. Transmutes *him*—not his opinions. This great impact is neither a persuasion of the intellect nor a beguiling of the senses. It does not

spring from the talent of the dramatist alone, or of the actor alone, or of the musician alone, or from an aggregate of their talents. It is not the work of any one artist-in-chief whose name is written on an earthly programme. It is the enveloping movement of the whole drama upon the soul of man. We surrender and are changed. "The outward sense is gone, the inward essence feels," until, betrayed by some flaw in the work of art or failure in ourselves, we begin to perceive again not the drama but its parts.

When the ear begins to hear, and the eye  
begins to see;

When the pulse begins to throb—the brain  
to think again—

The soul to feel the flesh, and the flesh to feel  
the chain—

—then illusion is broken. We return to our little prisons and through the bars are the critical spectators of a play.

I do not wish to suggest that a play which fails to produce illusion of this intensity ought to be condemned, for I have just written of that rare extreme which creates ecstasy in the audience—a veritable rebirth, a carrying out of the senses which seem to bound our humanity. What I wish to establish is that,

though the intensity of our experience of it may greatly vary, there is something, some power, some influence, some underlying unity, latent in the drama which has never yet been given its due place in criticism. You may think of it in what terms you will—as a synthesis of the arts of the theatre, as a hypocrant proceeding from their perfect unity, or you may say that it has no concrete existence but is at best a philosophical idea, a critical fiction. Well, beauty itself has no concrete existence and is, perhaps, a critical fiction, but it is one of the necessities of thought. And I suggest that as a wise man bases his criticism of life not upon judgment of its parts but upon apprehension of its unity, so judgment of the drama is to be founded on its illusion and not on its form or on the emotion it creates.

That is a general impression of what I mean by illusion. Let me now consider it more closely and indicate one of its distinguishing qualities.

It is a common error to praise a play because, as the lady in the stall behind me never tires of saying, it is "exactly like life." This is an error for two reasons: first, that if a play were exactly like life it would be a bad play, second, that no play has ever been or ever can be

exactly like life, and the lady is a liar. What she means, of course, is that the play does not outrage the naturalistic convention which she accepts. She will look at a photograph of her own son, whom she ought to know, and exclaim that it is exactly like him—whereas what she means is that the photograph represents him to her in an accepted convention of black and white. If she had lived in ancient Egypt and had been given by the gods the same son and the same photograph but different pictorial conventions, it is very possible that she would not have recognized her offspring and would have greatly preferred something more rectilinear. But fascinating though the subject of varying convention may be, I must not now pursue it. The lady's first error is more relevant to my general argument.

Aristotle said at the opening of the *Poetics* that "Epic and tragic composition, also comedy, the writing of dithyrambs and most branches of flute- and harp-playing are all, if looked at as a whole, imitations." Against this my own statement that "if a play were exactly like life it would be a bad play" may look a little small. The lady in the stall behind me would, if she were familiar with the *Poetics*, quote Aristotle with gusto. But Aris-

totle is one of those men of genius whose sentences, if taken out of their context, can be made to mean anything. To read a little farther into the *Poetics*—to observe indeed that Aristotle includes dithyrambs and flute- and harp-playing in his group of imitations—is to realize that he was by no means a photographic naturalist of the same æsthetic school with the lidy in the stalls.

It is true that art is rooted in imitation, and that, when it is cut off from that root and becomes decoration only or didacticism only, it dries up and withers. It is rooted in imitation—but in imitation of what? Do not let us say of ordinary life, for the phrase, though Aristotle himself uses it, has no precise meaning. Mr. Baldwin is said to be a representative Englishman, his life is presumably the ordinary life of an English ex-Prime Minister; but I do not see him as you see him, nor do we see him as Shelley would have seen him. How, then, is art to imitate him? It cannot. It can imitate my view of him or yours or Shelley's, but in each of these imitations there will be more of Shelley or you or me than of the hypothetical ordinariness of Mr. Baldwin. All that art can do in the way of imitation of a given natural subject is, first, to negative a spectator's own



preconceptions of that subject so that he lies open to imaginative acceptance of a different view, the artist's view, of it, and secondly, to impregnate him with this fresh, this alien understanding. Illusion is the impregnating force—in masterpieces permanently fruitful, in lesser works of art existent but without endurance, and from machine-made plays, however well made, absent. How often we say of a play that it was "a good story" or "an admirable entertainment"; that it was "cleverly constructed," or that its "characters were natural and alive"; and, having thus praised it, add with a vague sense of disappointment: "but there was nothing in it." What is the critical equivalent of that evasive phrase? The formalists have no answer; the impressionists have none. Does not the phrase mean that the play had no impregnating power? Though it had a thousand other virtues it was without illusion.

The lady of whom I have spoken believes that, in the photograph of her son, she has seen her own impression of him. Evidently she has done nothing of the kind. She has been persuaded to forget her view of him and to accept the camera's as her own. When she goes to a play, which seems to her exactly like life, she

has been persuaded to abandon her own view of life and to accept the dramatist's. It is true that, when the dramatist is of her own imaginative and intellectual kin, the exchange is not revolutionary, but, when he is a man of genius and his power to persuade her to take his view of *A Doll's House* or to see with his eyes the limp thrown at wife and mother by Strindberg's Father, the results are prodigious. That limp of Strindberg's still hurtles through the domestic air, and by Nora a million feminine squirrels were converted into ugresses whose cubs still embarrass us.

And why? Not because the lady in the stalls had ever before thought of herself as resembling the lady of Strindberg's lamp, not because, if she was a squirrel, she had ever perceived, until Ibsen pointed it out to her, the limitations of her comfortable cage; not because these great plays were like life as she had formerly understood it, but because her own preconceptions were stilled and afterwards impregnated. What stirred her, what influenced her, was not delusion, which is of herself, but illusion—that divine essence above the battle—which is of the drama. Wordsworth of all men helps to make this point clear. He is expressing his dislike of chatter

I am not One who much or oft delight  
 To season my fireside with personal talk  
 Of friends who live within an easy walk.

He is not attracted by—

. . . ladies bright  
 Sons, mothers, maidens withering on the  
 stalk. . . .

Better than these, he says, does—

. . . silence long,  
 Long, barren silence, square with my desire;  
 To sit without emotion, hope or aim,  
 In the loved presence of my cottage fire,  
 And listen to the flapping of the flame,  
 Or kettle whispering its faint undersong.

The remarkable word in this passage is "barren." The later stanzas show that he means not barren absolutely, but a silence barren of trivial and personal thoughts which might be a bar to a more profound impregnation.

Dreams, books are each a world; and books  
 we know  
 Are a substantial world, both pure and good.  
 Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and  
 blood,  
 Our pastime and our happiness will grow.  
 There find I personal themes, a plenteous  
 store,  
 Matter wherein right voluble I am. . . .

What he is speaking of here is the impregnating power of artistic illusion working upon a mind naturally silent, naturally meditative. In the theatre there is no natural meditation, no slipping flame and, unhappily, no kettle. Dramatic art has, therefore, a double function—first to still the pre-occupied mind, to empty it of triviality, to make it receptive and meditative, then to impregnate it. Illusion is the impregnating power. It is that spiritual force in dramatic art which impregnates the silences of the spectator, enabling him to imagine, to perceive, even to become, what he could not of himself become or perceive or imagine.

Inquiry, now, into the nature and origin of this impregnating force will expose the root of the theory. Illusion, as I conceive it, is form in suspense. The phrase is obscure and must be explained.

Analytical critics have all supposed that form is valuable in itself. They have based their judgments on a study of form, first establishing by general argument what they consider a perfect form for tragedy or comedy, then asking us to match particular plays with it. It is not surprising that they so often weary themselves in crying "This is not a play" when they encounter dramatic expression that does

not correspond with their ideal form. Their confusion, and it is a confusion that has run through the ages, springs from their failure to perceive one plain truth—that in a play form is not valuable *in itself*; only the suspense of form has value. In a play, form is not and cannot be valuable in itself, because until the play is over form does not exist.

Form is *in itself* valuable only in those works of art into which the time-factor does not enter and which, therefore, come to us whole. Painting, sculpture and architecture come to us whole; they are directly formal arts. An epic poem does not come to us whole, but a short lyric or a particular line therein may almost be said to do this, so slight, by comparison with an epic, is the time-factor involved. A play's performance occupies two or three hours. Until the end its form is latent in it. It follows that during the performance we are not influenced by the form itself, the completed thing, but by our anticipations of completion. We are, so to speak, waiting for the suspended rhyme or harmony, and this formal suspense has the greater power if we know beforehand, as the Greeks did, what the formal release is to be.

This suspense of form, by which is meant the incompleteness of a known completion, is

to be clearly distinguished from common suspense—suspense of plot—the ignorance of what will happen, and I would insist upon this distinction with all possible emphasis, for suspense of plot is a structural accident, and suspense of form is, as I understand it, essential to the dramatic art itself. The desire to know what will happen, when it exists at all, is a quality of the audience's delusion, it springs from their temporary belief that they are witnessing not art but life—it is the product of deluded curiosity and is often strongest in the weakest minds. It is obviously stronger in a housemaid watching a play by Mr Edgar Wallace than in a cultivated spectator of the Aeschylean *Prometheus*, and it would become progressively less strong even in the housemaid as by repeated visits to the theatre the designs of Mr Wallace were made more familiar to her. I do not wish to speak contemptuously of suspense of plot, for it often contributes to the pleasure of playgoing and reading; it has this value—that it keeps our eyes on stage or book. It may draw attention to a work of art and has been used by great artists for that purpose, but it is not essential to the art itself. Suspense of form, on the contrary, is one of those things without which drama is not.

It may be objected that without form there can be no suspense of form, and that to this extent a formal critic is justified. My argument is that he is wrong in insisting that particular dramatic forms are valuable in themselves. What rhyme is begun matters less than that the rhyme be completed; what harmony is used matters less than that it be resolved; what form is chosen, though it is true that some forms are more beautiful than others, matters less than that while the drama moves a form is being fulfilled.

Dramatic illusion, then, is the suspense of dramatic form, and is to be thought of as men think of divinity—an essence in which they may or may not partake, a power which may or may not visit them.

The task of applying this theory of illusion to particular plays must be left to the twentieth-century Lessing who writes the book to which this paper is a foreword. Having defined the idea, I must be content to give a few indications of its practical value and of the effect that its acceptance might produce on criticism.

Its value rests in its universality. Not long ago Mr. Granville Barker, speaking on "The Coming of Ibsen," quoted the damning judgments of many critics of the 'eighties on plays

now acknowledged to be masterpieces. They were very disturbing to a man who, within little more than an hour after each performance, writes his opinion on nearly two hundred plays a year. It is alarming to think that Mr. Greenville Barker, whose youth is perpetual, will rise up in 1980 and make hay with a file of *The Times* newspaper fifty years old. Even the closest study of the theory of illusion will not make any man infallible, but I do believe that it will protect critics from many of the errors into which our predecessors so easily fell. The adverse judgments of Ibsen, which now seem to us most unreasonable, prove upon examination to have been inspired by the old prejudice about form. Ibsen, intent upon introducing new subjects to the stage, was creating new shapes to contain them, and the rigid formalists, clinging to prescribed form, condemned him. For the same reason Strindberg has been denied the recognition due to him, though the time will certainly come when it will be perceived that, in such work as *To Damascus* and *The Dream Play*, he prepared the way for what is best in the modernist movements. He was an Expressionist long before Expressionism, as a cult, was heard of, and did with genius what hundreds of char-



latans are now attempting to do without it. Ibsen has partly broken through the formalists; Strindberg has not; and both are considered freaks because they do not bow down to that spirit which still presides powerfully over the English theatre—the spirit of Sardou. The reason is that English playgoers and critics are still bound, consciously or sub-consciously, to the idea that suspense means suspense of plot, and that form in drama, as in the plastic arts, is a static thing and valuable in itself. A critic who understands the theory of illusion would never fall into the error of saying that Ibsen, because he did not strive for suspense of plot, was ignorant of the theatre, or that Strindberg, because he created new forms and rhythms, was writing a play. Instead of making these rash errors the critic would say to himself: “Here is something with which I am unfamiliar. Here is a man struggling for a new form. I cannot judge his work as I would judge sculpture or architecture in which there is no time element. While the play is in progress I must yield myself to this moving, developing, organic thing, the suspense of form, and must realize that only when the complete form is known will the suspense of it have full effect on me.”

If the critics of the 'eighties had said that to themselves when they took up their pen, Mr. Grinville Barker would have been robbed of his powder and shot. The theory of illusion is universal, because it enables criticism to keep its balance amid the shock of new forms.

It is universal, too, because it establishes a standard of judgment which may, with intelligence, be applied to plays of all kinds--to tragedy, to comedy, and even to farce. The illusion of tragedy is the highest of all, the illusion of comedy differs from it in intensity but not in kind. The illusion of farce is, I admit, a cripple who has lost a leg. It is barren, it impregnates no silences. But a farce, if it be good in its own kind, has a unity, an "essence above the battle," and it certainly has suspense of form. Indeed, there is hardly to be found a more illuminating distinction between suspense of form and suspense of plot, or between illusion and delusion, than may be perceived in a good farce. Who cares in a farce what will happen? Who believes that anything is happening? We are not deluded by the fantastic narrative nor made curious by it. Our pleasure, if we are pleased, arises from the farce's skill in binding us by its own peculiar symmetry, and from its power

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to create an illusion, which is never delusion, of  
a world good-humouredly insane.

The theory of illusion has a third and very important claim to universality—namely, that it may be applied, as no other critical theory can, to plays that do not depend on a conflict of individual character, and thus supplies a link between very ancient and very modern drama. Nearly all criticism has presumed that such a conflict is an essential part of the drama. I am persuaded that it is not, and that if critics remain wedded to this idea of individual struggle and bound to the forms appropriate to it, they will blunder in their judgment of the drama of the future as critics in the past blundered in their judgment of Ibsen and Strindberg. This was deeply impressed upon me when I went to Delphi to see in the ancient theatre performances of Aeschylus—the *Prometheus* and *The Suppliants*. What I wrote then returns to me with increasing force whenever I contemplate the problem of illusion :

It has often been pointed out as remarkable by commentators on *The Suppliants* that Aeschylus, having decided to use the actor and having latent in him that prodigious power to thrust forward the history of the drama of which his extant pieces are evidence, should here have employed the actor so little. Only in the sharp dialogue between the

Argive King and Herakl, it has been said, is their context of individuality and a complete though momentary, emancipation of the dramatic from the narrative or ritualistic forms. The reason commonly given for this and indeed the only reason deducible from an unacted text is that Aeschylus was as yet half-blind to his own discovery, that he held the actor in his hands as a child holds a strange toy, knowing not how to use him. This explanation, this misunderstanding of Aeschylus, lies I believe, at the root of the charges of obscurity and primitiveness that have been brought against the play. In performance at Delphi it is neither primitive nor obscure. When once the Chorus is felt as a living presence with collective individuality and character, the play appears, not as a primitive struggling towards a new drama, but as a fully developed product of an older tradition. In departures from this tradition Aeschylus was certainly experimenting, but the impression given by the performance is that the experiments were being made as much in reluctance as in eagerness. Whenever the actor shows his head above the choical unity we feel instantly that, though the tension (or suspense of plot) is increased, an extraordinary composure, a deep and passionate perfection of design, is being dissipated. What was this composed perfection that our drama is without and that Aeschylus, for all the promise of a different form, was reluctant to sacrifice? May it not have consisted in this—that the collective formalism of 50 Dionysos may more serenely express the universal truths of the spirit than the particularized portrait of one woman? Is it not possible that the pre-Aeschylean drama held already a key that gave it freedom from the bonds of naturalism (and of

individual character)—a key for which modern dramatists from Strindberg to Lenormand have been desperately seeking? The Chorus, we know, had other and less æsthetically conscious origins, but by the time of Aeschylus it had probably become a highly conscious æsthetic instrument used not merely ritualistically and lyrically but as a synthesis of humanity that our particularized and personal stage has lost.\*

A synthesis, I would add, towards which our stage is now moving. Perhaps the most significant evidence of this movement—this link between modernism and the pre-Aeschylean theatre—has been, in London, Mr. O'Casey's attempt in *The Silver Tassie* to rediscover the Chorus and to reintroduce the compression of verse into drama with a contemporary setting. This play was rejected by the Abbey Theatre and Mr. W. B. Yeats; it was condemned by many critics in the same tones of misunderstanding and intolerance with which Ibsen was condemned; fifty years hence Mr. Granville Barker will have them all on his list. And it is not at all surprising that, in an age which still bases its judgment on Aristotelian forms or on Dryden's definition of a play, criticism should be at fault, for neither Aristotle nor Dryden leaves room for the pre-

\* *The Times*, May 12, 1930.

Aeschylean and twentieth-century synthesis. Our criticism is rooted in Dryden's idea of a "just and lively representation of human nature . . . for the delight and instruction of mankind"—an idea that denies Strindberg and the pre-Aeschylean chorus, and will, unless it is revised, deny much more in the days to come. The theory of illusion, if received as a basis of criticism, would make unnecessary these fatal denials. While maintaining, in the idea of form in suspense, much that is good in the old critical disciplines, and so preserving criticism from the impressionistic anarchy that threatens it, it would, in the complementary idea of illusion as an impregnating force, restore to criticism a spiritual liberty and boldness that it has lost.

## ANIMADVERSIONS ON DANCERS

*By Edward Gordon Craig*

I WAS looking at a book on costume and armour, and it led me to reflect about actors and dancers and singers—and if you will believe me that I have no particular conviction that these thoughts are very original, I will write some of them down here and now.

This is what occurred to me as I thought about European dancers. I remembered how I had, once in my life, seen an actor dancing in a ballet, and how curious it had seemed to me, and interesting; and I had thought to myself: “By Jove, this is a man!” Why that should have impressed me so much, I did not discover at the time—but ever since, when watching the performance of a ballet, I have been sorry to feel that “By jingo, these are not men!”

They are men, of course—very manly young fellows become dancers, and in the last twenty-five years or so, Europe has had several famous young dancers: and though none except Nijinsky may be quite so famous as was young

Vestris, many, I daresay, are as good dancers as the best of the eighteenth century.

I have no recollection of having seen Dolin or Massine dance, but I have seen many whose names, unfortunately, I forget.

These dancers interpreted all sorts of things besides men—in fact they rarely, if ever, transformed themselves into men—but gods, slaves, savages, roses, swans, or Harlequin or Pierrot, and it was strange to note that they, one and all, would always seem to be making efforts to fly.

I came, in time, to look for this bird-like expression in every ballet, and I never failed to find it.

Then I began to look at the dancers' costumes, and saw that there was not the same regular attempt made by the dancers to dress themselves like birds, but one and all seemed agreed upon dressing up in something resembling bathing-dresses. I had an impression of leaping, shivering figures, costumed in something tight and elastic—not masked, but wearing rather pained expressions even when smiling—and they seldom failed to smile. Bad dancers, you will say. . . not at all—they were some of the best dancers of the day—and all of them gave us pleasure.



Up they leapt—and down they came, ever so lightly—thud! Undismayed, they went at it again—up they went and down they came, even more lightly—pat! And now thoroughly encouraged, they went up and up again—but ever descended, later . . . always gracefully, sometimes exquisitely, but down they came—ping!

They all seemed to favour a descent fairly near the footlights. They would then trip off to the back of the stage, as near to the black-cloth as possible, and once again make a rapid bee-line for the footlights—jumping—twiddling with the feet—bouncing and plunging—and, it seemed, thoroughly enjoying themselves in their futile attempts to fly. The muscular arms, spread out very much as wings, emphasized the suggestion of flying.

Looking at a book of costumes\* and armour, I began to think of actors and dancers; and I recalled all this leaping and twiddling of the latter—and a number of questions came leaping and twiddling into my head. “Why all that bounding into the air?—why that failure to fly?—and I wonder why they reveal quite

\* *A Short History of Costume and Armour.* By F. M. Kelly and Randolph Schwabe. (Batsford. 25s.)

so much bone and muscle," I thought, pausing a long time over this, in the hope of discovering some real, sound reason . . . "And why are they all in such a hurry?—and why those bathing-dresses?"

Was it that some trainer or producer had told them they must leap—must try to fly—must wear what they wore—and must positively reveal all the bones and muscles possible? Or can it be that these are among the unwritten laws?

The questions left me no rest, and I could find no answer to them—and still I do not know whose fault it is—for to me these things seem to be defects which surely could be put right.

What might a man do who would dance, and how might he be dressed?

"Well," I reasoned, "if he must try to fly—but that's all nonsense . . . to dance cannot mean to do something else—or rather, to fail to do it. To dance means to dance—*ballare*. A ball bounces, or it rolls—but a dancer is not a ball, and never was a ball; so banish the notion of rolling and bouncing. Dance is something else. I fancy I know what it is, but for the moment perhaps it would be more helpful not to develop a theory, but to suggest

what a dancer should *not* do and *not* wear." So I jotted some of these things down.

The dancer should not everlastingly look happy about nothing . . . nor grave, neither; he should not let us see him assume the "first position," the moment he is about to begin to bounce or spin. He must not keep on repeating himself; he must not seem to struggle over his work.

And what should he wear? Messrs. Kelly and Schwabe gave me a very definite suggestion. First, he might wear a kind of light armour, in which to practise; and secondly, by this practice, he might in time come to wear his muscles, bones, limbs and carry his head and move his feet more easily—dancing with his mind and using his face . . . not grimacing—using his face; and then it would matter less what he wore on his limbs.

Let us look into this question of light armour as stuff to train in, so as to cure this growing tendency to hop and leap and bounce.

I have seen young men training, in the schools, to be dancers, and I have noticed that they remove almost all clothing, so as not to be encumbered. Why, you ask, should I want to put them in even the lightest of armour?

I would like to do something to make *super-*

*fluens* movement more difficult than it is at present. Armour, as worn by knights in battle in the Middle Ages, would make movement impossible to dancers, but I mean something else. we should be able, I believe, to contrive some other, more reasonable costume, heavy enough here and there to curb, automatically, unessential movement . . . for it is this unessential movement which is the death of the dance.

Do not laugh at my suggestion, but remember how Demosthenes put pebbles into his mouth, in order to teach himself how to speak . . . what an obstruction these pebbles must have been! Think a while about that. Ask a man who can write, paint, play on instruments, engrave on wood or metal, or practise any of the crafts, whether the craftsman is encouraged to free himself of all restrictions, or whether he welcomes obstructions; and ask him to explain how it is that the enforced limitations of his material do not baffle him and render him desperate. He will tell you that he welcomes the assistance of these constraints.

I suggest that you obstruct movement, and then see if all the unnecessary flim-flam of motion does not begin to disappear.

The whole race of European dancers seems

to have been able, far too easily, to acquire graces, to reproduce gestures and to dance in a way which begins to tire the public. Why should it not master something different—overcome a few more difficult things—and so advance a step, this century?

## WILLIAM BLAKE AND REVOLUTION

*By John Middleton Murry*

SOME time shortly after the death of his beloved brother Robert, which happened in 1787, William Blake was liberated from the tyranny of his Self by the Divine Vision. The Divine Vision, which to most people means little or nothing at all, is a perfectly simple thing. Being a simple and natural happening, it makes all the difference. What it is, I have tried to explain in various places—in particular in "*The Life of Jesus*" and in "*Keats and Shakespeare*." It is exactly what Meister Eckhart, who knew all about it, called the "eternal rebirth of the soul"; or again what Keats meant when it was revealed to him that the world is not a Vale of tears but a Vale of soul-making. The Divine Vision may be called a vision of God, if only it is acknowledged (in Blake's words) that "God only acts and is in existing Beings, or Men."

This Vision is a revolutionary happening in

the man to whom it comes. There is a profound convulsion, a "death," and a radical change. Everything—the world outside him, and the world within—becomes extraordinarily simple, and essentially it remains extraordinarily simple. The Divine Vision is final. The struggle of the individual, thenceforward, is to express this extraordinary simplicity, into which more and more things, as his knowledge expands, are simply received.

All the elements of the Divine Vision are present in Blake's writings of 1788; so that it is certain that between his brother's death and the end of the following year the Vision had occurred. Personally, I have little doubt that it was intimately connected with his vision of his brother. But this is of little importance. What is important is to realize that in Blake himself this inward revolution had occurred before the end of 1788.

Now it is obvious to anyone to whom this inward revolution has happened that it may, and ought to, come to everybody. First, because it is eminently a natural happening—"natural" in the sense of Keats' perfect dictum on poetry: that "if it come not as naturally as the leaves to a tree it had better not come at all"; "natural" in the sense the

the birth of a child is "natural" though it comes through labour and pain and a lapse from consciousness, second, because the lucidity of simple knowledge which it leaves behind--the knowledge that things are what they are, and not something else--is manifestly an end of human knowing. It is not final in the sense that we can never know more, it is final in the sense that we can never know *differently*. We know that all knowledge of a different kind is not knowledge, it is partial and not complete.

Thus inward revolution in the individual therefore leads straight to the expectation of a revolution in the world of men. For a world of men in which this simple and natural change had become universal would be a changed world. And this is the real meaning of Jesus's much abused saying that "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you." It does not mean merely that to retire inward is the way to discover that kingdom, it means that if *all* men would or could seek first the Kingdom within them--which He did not think was really difficult. "Seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened"--then the Kingdom of Heaven would be on earth. The teaching of Jesus is the combination, in one



simple and vital unity, of inward and outward. It is the teaching that the key to the Kingdom on earth will be found by the man within.

The happening of the inward revolution brings with it, inevitably, the expectation of a revolution in the world of men. It does not happen, and there are very good reasons why it does not happen (see Marx's "*Capital*" *passim*); the chief being that men have to keep themselves alive. And until we see to it that it is really possible for men as individuals "to take no thought for the morrow; what ye shall eat and what ye shall drink," they will be, except in rare instances, incapable of the revolution within and without which the Divine Vision demands.

But that is another story—very pertinent, and not in the least contradictory. The way to revolution is hard and practical. But the necessity of revolution is given by the Divine Vision. The necessity is so obvious that the event seems imminent. Blake in 1787 or 1788 had had the Vision; in 1789 the French Revolution began. It could not but have seemed to him that the Vision was stirring in the limbs of the giant world itself. So it did seem; and he wrote a poem which was not published

until 1913, the year before the War *The French Revolution*

This poem of Blake's, nominally unfinished, yet obviously complete, is a wonderful thing. It is the interpretation of the outbreak of the French Revolution in terms of the Divine Vision. Therefore it is completely without hatred. The great symbolic spokesman of the old order is endowed with the majesty and dignity with which, in a like debate, Dostoevsky endowed his *Grand Inquisitor*. The Duke of Burgundy, "the ancientest peer of France," speaks against the Revolution with the authority and might of Order itself.

Shall this marble-built heaven become a clay  
cottage, this earth an oak stool, and these  
mowers

From the Atlantic mountains mow down all  
this great starry harvest of six thousand  
years?

Till the power and dominion is rent from the  
pole, sword and sceptre from sun and moon,  
The law and gospel from fire and air, and  
eternal reason and science

From the deep and the solid, and man lay his  
faded head down on the rock

Of eternity, where the eternal lion and eagle  
remain to devour?

It is the Law, in Blake's most comprehensive meaning, that is being challenged and over-

thrown by the French Revolution. The Law has endured six thousand years—since the creation of man. By the Law the starry hosts have been fixed in their places, the Infinite made finite, till the heavens are as a palace built of marble. The Law and the Gospel—for the Gospel has been fixed, like the infinite heavens, into Law—have gained dominion over fire and air. The waters and the earth have been conquered by eternal Reason and Science. All the four elements, the whole universe, is now under Law; and Law achieves its perfect and typical form in the mechanical motions of the starry heavens. If the Law be rent from the heavens, all that remains for man is to

lay his faded head down on the rock  
Of eternity, where the eternal lion and eagle  
remain to devour.

Man is terrified of freedom, said Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor to the captive Jesus; he seeks only to lay the burden down. There is that grim realization in the words of Burgundy. And Burgundy is also uttering the cold ecstasy of Kant when he identified the law of the starry heavens above us and the moral law within. The "categorical imperative," whether enthroned in the visible

authority of the Catholic Church, or the invisible authority of the practical Reason, is what Revolution, in Blake's meaning, must overthrow.

And for what must it be overthrown? For Freedom And what does Blake mean by Freedom?

That is the question And though it is simple to answer, the answer cannot be understood save by those who have glimpsed the Divine Vision For in Blake's eyes, Freedom and Eternity are one. Burgundy does not understand that How could he understand it, and still be the great defender of the Law? If he understood, he would be for Revolution with Orleans But his eyes are closed by the Law To him therefore Eternity is a faded rock on which weary humanity sinks down in the wilderness of Liberty, only to be devoured by the Eagle and the Lion He does not know, as Blake knows, that on the rock of Eternity the Eagle does not devour man, it uplifts him, and the roaring of lions is his comfort.

When thou seest an Eagle, thou seest a portion  
of Genius lift up thy head!

The roaring of lions, the howling of wolves  
is a portion of eternity, too great for  
the eye of man

Too great for the eye of man still closed by the Law.

But what *is* Freedom, for Blake? It is to know Eternity, and in that knowledge to be eternal, and in the freedom of that knowledge to be free. It is to have destroyed the veil of the Self within one, which is the web of the Law, and to possess or be possessed by one's own identity. It is to know that the created universe which Burgundy upholds, which is now—at the end of six thousand years, its appointed period—menaced with the destruction of revelation, and revolution, is a man-made Universe; it is a vast projection of the Selfhood, fixing and concealing the veritable Universe of living Identities, wherein all things, and creatures, and men “shine by their own internal light.” This revelation of the true Universe is an act of the Imagination, achieved in man by the annihilation of the Self and the liberation of his own Identity. That is what Blake meant by Freedom. It is to live in the knowledge of Eternity, and as a portion of Eternity. It is not licence, it is not liberty, it is not anarchy: for the living law of Identity is that one Identity cannot negate another.

Against Burgundy, the spokesman of this

revelation of revolution is Orleans, and a glorious defence he makes of it. He is, indeed, "generous as mountains." At his rising the Archbishop of Paris, who has commended repression, is struck dumb: not speech but inhuman hussings come from his lips while Orleans speaks.

O princes of fire, whose flames are for growth,  
not consuming,

Fear not dreams, fear not visions: nor be you  
dismay'd with sorrows which flee at the  
morning!

Can the fires of Nobility ever be quench'd, or  
the stars by a stormy night?

Is the body diseas'd when the members are  
healthful? can the man be bound in sorrow

Whose every function is fill'd with its fiery  
desire? can the soul whose brain and heart

Cast their rivers in equal tides thro' the great  
Paradise, languish because the feet,

Hands, head, bosom, and parts of love follow  
their high breathing joy?

And can Nobles be bound when the people are  
free, or God weep when His children are  
happy?

Have you never seen Lafayette's forehead, or  
Mirabeau's eyes, or the shoulders of Target,

Or Bailly the strong foot of France, or Cler-  
mont the terrible voice? and your robes

Still retain their own crimson: mine never yet  
faded, for fire delights in its form

But go, merciless man! enter into the infinite  
labyrinth of another's brain

Ere thou measure the circle that he shall run.  
 Go, thou cold recluse into the fires  
 Of another's high flaming rich bosom, and  
 return unconsum'd, and write laws.  
 If thou canst not do this, doubt thy theories;  
 learn to consider all men as thy equals,  
 Thy brethren, and not as thy foot or thy hand,  
 unless thou first fearest to hurt them.

Here is the Divine Vision made concrete, in the universal recognition of Identity. In the imagination of Orleans the Selfhood has been purged away from a whole society of men, and a great nation has achieved its own Identity. The most splendid phrase of the whole splendid speech is the simple words: "for fire delights in its form." It means that there is a true and living form in things and creatures and men: this true and living form is attained in man by the attainment of his Identity. When that native and fundamental Identity is thwarted by the Selfhood, there is a form indeed, but it is a false form, a dead and alien form, a form felt and known as a Negation. But in its true form Identity is delighted. This conviction Blake expresses in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in the famous phrase "Energy is eternal Delight." The conception is really blindingly simple. All things and creatures enjoy their own Identity; they have

it, and delight in their form. It is only Man who, in his Selfhood, denies them their true form, and by so doing denies his own. If Man could only see how all things and creatures delight in their form, he would delight in his own: for his Identity would have dispossessed his Selfhood.

The total harmony of all men, possessed by their own Identities, and delighting in their own true forms, would be the Universal Man in Act, totally purged of all Negation. Every Minute Particular—to anticipate another phrase of Blake's—would be filled with the joy of its own Identity, and incapable of negating the Identity of another. "Can the man be bound in sorrow," Orleans asks, "whose every function is fill'd with its fiery desire?" It is the Universal Man of whom he speaks: of the condition when the whole of Human Existence has passed into Eternity, and the One Man renews his youth.

There, expressed in language which, after all, is not hard to understand, is what Revolution meant for Blake. It is what Revolution means for every genuine revolutionary. We shall not achieve it. We know that. We are old, where Blake was young in 1789. But if we lose that vision from our hearts, we



shall achieve nothing at all. The wonderful thing is that the man who has seen the Divine Vision, as Blake saw it, and as we see it again through him, can never lose it. Once seen, it is seen for ever.

## TWO CONTRASTS IN LIVELS

By Henry W. Newinson

**A**T Byron's home at Newstead Abbey last week (July 16, 1931) I met the Greek Prime Minister, M. Venizelos, for the third, or possibly for the fourth, time in his varied career. I am a little doubtful about the first meeting, for in those days his name was quite unknown to myself as to the rest of the world. It was in the summer of 1897, just after the conclusion of the disastrous Greco-Turkish war, in which I had accompanied the Greek armies in Thessaly and Epirus, and had learnt the complete art of retreat. Massingham, of the *Daily Chronicle*, had then ordered me to Crete, where the rebellion of the Greek inhabitants against Turkish domination had caused the war and was still simmering. The towns along the north coast of the island were occupied by detachments of troops from all the Great Powers except Germany. They were nominally stationed there to uphold the sovereignty

of the Turk, really to watch lest one of them should attempt to grab the splendid harbour of Suda Bay, where, in fact, some British warships were lying to protect the poor little Turkish fleet, which could hardly float or fire. The action of the Powers was called "The European Concert."

One afternoon, walking out from Canéa, and eluding the French outposts by creeping through the rocks, I arrived by mere good fortune at the very headquarters of the rebel bands, and by shouting the Greek name for the *Daily Chronicle* I secured a patriotic welcome. I was placed at a little table in a mouldering cottage, while three rebel officers sat upon the bed, and the whole place was soon crowded with Cretans, fine-featured men, all wearing the black Cretan handkerchief round their heads, and black cotton trousers like undivided bags with the feet thrust through at one end. All were armed with rifles, revolvers, and sheathed Cretan knives, eighteen inches long. I had been instructed to find out the minimum demands of the rebels, and I discovered they were briefly two: the immediate withdrawal of the Turkish troops from an island which counted only 75,000 Moslems in a population of 300,000;

and the ultimate union with Greece. Both those demands have now been long ago won, chiefly by British action, but the point I wish to recall is that, almost certainly, one of those rebel officers seated upon the bed was Venizelos. Or if he was not there, he certainly was one among the tattered and hungry "hands" to whom I twice made my way a few days later, staying among them by the hospitality of the rebel leader, Hidri Mikhali, the old and almost mythical hero of the great insurrection thirty years before.

And last week that same Venizelos, once a leader among the tattered, hungry and rather turbulent bands of rebels, but now standing in a gay little pavilion over which the Greek flag waved, was reading a speech in English to a variegated English and Greek audience which had crowded into one of the most beautiful English parks to hear him. He was the guest of the City of Nottingham, to which the Abbey and park had been generously presented. He had lunched with the Lord Mayor in the new Council House, tea in silver teapots awaited him in the long dining hall of the historic Abbey, and he was dressed in the most rigorous fashion of the English gentleman—top-hat, long black coat, white waistcoat, striped

trousers and all. With his fine, pale face, white hair, short white beard and spectacles, he looked the very model of a highly-educated, elderly statesman, as indeed he was. After a career of varied services and varied situations, not always enviable, he was now Prime Minister of the Greek Republic, one of the most influential personalities in European history. But as I looked at him, I remembered those tattered and hungry insurrectionists among the ruined cottages and mutilated olive-groves of Crete thirty-four years ago, and I thought what contrasts of fortune one man may experience in this short and single life.

From a seat in front of the pavilion, I could look up to a window high upon the sham gothic front of the building attached to the ruins of the old but poorly-constructed Abbey. It was the window of Byron's bedroom, where his canopied bed still stands, surrounded by the furniture he actually used, including a looking-glass that had once so often reflected a head, as Venizelos said, fit for the sculpture of Pheidias. From that window, in boyhood and youth, he had looked over a lake, drained by an artificial cascade into the wide fishponds below, and beyond the lake to part of the vast domain which was his own. With its gardens,

wastes, and relics of old Sherwood Forest, that domain is, as I said, one of the loveliest of English parks. In the midst of its beauty, haunted by memories of mediæval monks and the Robin Hood of our ballads, the poet grew up into the wayward, passionate, high-hearted, imaginative being whom all the world was soon to know.

The product of a wealthy school and a famous University, never short of food or drink except by his own will, surrounded by friends, a member of the House of Lords, irresistible to all women for his beauty and fame, and hunted almost to death by some, at times in debt, and then again endowed with riches *beyond the dreams of poets, a courted and* luxurious traveller in Europe, he was famous before he was thirty for his genius and his fascinating errors. Writing with ease the melancholic and romantic verses and dramas which exactly touched, or created, the melancholic and romantic spirit of his age, and, again, pouring out models of satire, wit, and indignation hardly surpassed in any language, he spread his fame from land to land. He gave a new tone to the youthful life of the world, and his very name signified its inspiration. To all youthful and generous hearts, no

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career seemed more splendid and more enviable.

And then, in contrast, I see the filthy little fishing-village of Missolonghi, surrounded by marsh and muddy flats, near a shallow lagoon across which one could see the mountain of Cephalonia far away. Rain fell without ceasing, and the village lanes were deep in slush. There Byron was living in a ramshackle cottage, which a few men in the cellar could shake like an earthquake. Round him were groups of mutinous and murderous rebels, always clamouring for money and food, and never to be trusted. He lay stricken with some form of malarial fever. His own doctor could do nothing but weep, howl, and advise bleeding. "Do you think that I desire life?" Byron said to one of his few friends. "I am heartily disgusted with it, and shall bless the hour when I shall leave it. What pleasure could life give me? Few men have lived so much as I. I am literally a young old man." (To re-translate from André Maurois' admirable work.) And later, to the same, he said: "I do not regret life, for I came to Greece to end a miserable existence. I have given Greece my money and my time. Now I give her my life." Later still, in delirium he cried: "For-

ward! Courage! Follow my example! Have no fear!" He called upon his daughter Ada, whom he had never seen. He prayed for a blessing upon his dear sister Augusta and her children. He even mentioned his wife. "I do not fear death," he said. "But why have I not been at home before coming here?" Tempestuous rain beat upon the windows, and terrifying thunder roared. "The great Lord is dead," said the armed men and shepherds in the filthy street outside.

What was it in this man that has made him what is called immortal? All over the civilized world his name and his works were known, and his name is known still. As poets, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats, among his *English contemporaries*, surpassed him. But outside England they are known only to a few French critics and a few German professors. Everyone in every European country knows Byron. To most people abroad English literature begins and ends with Shakespeare and Byron. What is the reason of this amazing fame? It comes partly, I suppose, from the wide appeal of the emotions he expressed—a love, passion, and indignation that are universal. He often expressed them with rhetoric, but most simple-hearted people like



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rhetoric. He expressed them with a fervent simplicity that everyone could understand. Even his melancholy and cynicism were not entirely affected, and nearly all youth passes through the same phases still, while Byron not only complied with a prevailing mood, but himself inspired it.

As to other sides of literature—those sides in which his real eminence lay—I suppose no language can show a power of memorable description or of satiric verse surpassing parts of *Childe Harold* and nearly all *Don Juan*. What consummate ease in the treatment! What perfection in the expression! No line amiss, no witticism forced, however unexpected. Take, merely as one casual instance, that irresistible stanza of *Don Juan* (Canto I, cxiii):

The sun set, and up rose the yellow moon :  
The devil's in the moon for mischief ; they  
Who call'd her chaste, methinks, began too  
soon

Their nomenclature ; there is not a day,  
The longest, not the twenty-first of June,  
Sees half the business in a wicked way  
On which three single hours of moonshine  
smile—

And then she looks so modest all the while.

What a sudden delight comes with that addition to “the longest day!” There is the

ease, the natural and effortless wit, which make the joy of reading Byron in his finest work. And he was not parsimonious "Byron," said Goethe, "was the most productive man who ever lived."

But, when all is said, it was his death in that squalid scene at Missolonghi which raised him so high above contemporaries who surpassed him in poetic art. "The soul's joy," said Shelley, "lies in action," but how few writers have known that joy! It is as the active and defiant champion of freedom that Byron is remembered.

Hereditary bondsmen! know ye not  
Who would be free themselves must strike the  
blow?

Can tyrants but by tyrants conquered be,  
And Freedom find no champion and no child?

Yet, Freedom! yet thy banner, torn, but flying,  
Streams like the thunder-storm against the  
wind

Those are verses that have stirred the world, and we may still remember them, even though the mention of freedom is now greeted with a curse or a contemptuous smile by all the tyrants, dictators, and oligarchs of Europe, as by the most redoubtable of our British doctrinaires.

## FRANK HARRIS

By A. A. Baumann

WHEN I met Harris in the 'nineties he was deep in magazine and newspaper dealings. He had just sold the *Fortnightly Review*, which he had bought and edited, in succession to Morley, and did it very well. He had also edited the *Evening News*, which he made a mess of, being too unpunctual, and he had written *Montes the Matador* with great success. From a barrister, whose name escapes me, the *Saturday Review* was bought for a song—two or three thousand pounds—and Frank was full of his new toy, which he was editing in a way that made the publishers wince. I met him one afternoon at Lady Jeune's (as she was then), and so delighted him by repeating George Eliot's saying that "You must either give people what they're used to or what they don't understand," that he carried me off to a restaurant and bound me to his chariot, there and then. The money for these deals he got out of his

wife's fortune. He had met the widow of a North Country man of wealth in a Highland castle, where he dominated by his tongue his hostess and her friend, who was unaccountably allowed to marry him without any settlement.

Either from insolence or genuine inability to mark time, he was seldom less than two hours late for an appointment. I asked him to lunch at the Café Royal at one-thirty. As he was at that time worth six or seven hundred a year to me, I waited till three, when he appeared without any apology. I invited him to dinner at Boodle's Club at eight-thirty, which I explained I had fixed late to suit him, and that he must be "on time." He came at *nine-thirty*, and lapped up the club's superb charet with smacking gust, which he seemed to think would do for an apology. Harris quite recognized that his habits made him an impossible editor. However, before he quitted, he did or tried to do his country one service. He wrote an editorial pointing out that between England and Germany war was inevitable, and was already beating up the sky.

Harris had an uncanny instinct, which would have made his fortune on the Stock Exchange, for choosing the precise hour "to stand from under," as the Americans say. He

knew, none better, that the time to clear out had come. He chose the years between the Jameson Raid and the outbreak of the Boer War. He formed a company, and the first of his big shareholders was Alfred Beit. His arrangement of the share capital was new in this country, though it was common in the United States. He issued for cash 30,000 Preference shares and 2,000 Deferred shares, which he allotted to himself, with a voting power of absolute control. Beit gave his cheque without troubling about figures or a balance-sheet; he was anxious for a good Press. But for the group, consisting of Lord Hardwicke (the penultimate), the late Duke of Fife, and Lords Derby and Farquhar, some figures and a balance-sheet were necessary, and they were of a remarkable kind. Even more important than circulation, so often fictitious, the advertisements are the assets which the purchaser of a paper most carefully scans. The three chief advertisers in the *Saturday* at the time were stated to be the Café Royal, a carriage builder in Bond Street, and a firm of gunmakers in South Audley Street; but we could not trace any payments by any of them. On sending to inquire and ask for payment, if only on account, the directors were told: (1)

By the Café Royal, that Mr Harris had a large unpaid bill for luncheons and dinners, and that they had agreed to pay themselves by advertisements. When the bill had been worked off, the Café Royal would be happy, etc (2) The coach-maker in Bond Street explained that Mr Harris had bought a brougham and Victoria, for which he had not paid, and that the advertisements were being set off against the bill (3) The gun-maker had just sold Mr Harris a pair of guns, the price of which he was working off in ads, so that money was not to be thought of The directors, of whom I was one, knew that they might have brought an action against Harris, but he had disappeared to the South of France, where we heard that he had invested his spoils in *The Hermitage*, then being started at Monte Carlo

There followed the Boer War, and five years later Hardwicke died, the group lost their money, and the *Review* was sold to Sir Gervase Beckett Only once again did I run up against Frank Harris, at Brighton, in 1910 or 1911, when he scowled, and said something disagreeable about my looking old, and the *Review* going to pot

The only human beings of the male sex that

Harris seemed to be fond of were Harold Frederic, the American novelist, a Christian scientist, and Oscar Wilde, to whom he showed genuine kindness. The doubts that I have heard thrown upon Harris's authorship of *The Elder Conklin*, which some said was written by Frederic, appear absurd to anyone who had heard Harris talk. He talked indeed better than he wrote, and to my taste better than Oscar Wilde, because he was really spontaneous, whereas Wilde's epigrams always wore an air of preparation, though, of course, some of his best ones could not have been so; for instance, his reply to the man who asked him what he should do about the conspiracy of silence against his books: "Join it, you fool, join it." Harris was no niggard with his wit. He would pour out his words just as generously when he was alone with you, as when he had an audience. This was one of his good points. I remember his declaiming for a couple of hours to convince me that words were more important than deeds. One of his victims said ruefully to me: "His talk stimulates me like champagne"; and luckily its effect was as evanescent.

What Frank Harris did in America during the war, until 1917, and his subsequent

obscured sulphurous existence in France, the world knows as well as I. A foolish and gushing American wrote to ask me to contribute to a Life of Frank Harris which he was preparing. I replied by asking him whether he had read the *Autobiography*. The rest is silence, except that I remember reading on the flyleaf of the copy that was lent me the name of one of the best-known of American editors and publicists.



## THE END OF "THE WORLD"

By J. P. Collins

NEW York has lost one of her distinctive landmarks, and the international press one of its most potent instruments for peace and goodwill. *The World* has ceased to exist, after surviving its real founder, Joseph Pulitzer, by nearly twenty years, and maintaining more or less effectually the ideals that he set up in public life with such courage and tenacity. The fact is, conditions have changed in journalism, as in so much else, to an extent that he, with all his perspicacity, could never have foreseen. Without any criticism of his successors, it may be said that their gallant attempt to carry on his work has failed, and their failure has been a costly one all round. Together with its evening and Sunday issues, *The World* had sunk a million dollars a year for its last five years; and the interests of the founder's descendants—three sons and several grandchildren—have forced themselves on the trustees as paramount any

consideration of the paper's reputation and existence

The only misgiving was as to their powers of sale. Accordingly they resorted to the Surrogate's Court for legal authority, and this having been conceded, a sale has been effected on honourable terms. To-day, in place of a great morning paper, New York has a hybrid in the *World-Telegram*, an evening issue with new blood in its veins, and a harder constitution, let us hope, for withstanding the drift and pressure of competition. Nevertheless, America, and not America alone, is greatly a loser by the change, and "Newspaper Row" is a misnomer at last, for the headquarters of its various groups of papers are either non-existent or removed elsewhere.

The terms of Pulitzer's will, as quoted in court, struck a marked distinction between his property at St. Louis (the Pulitzer Publishing Company) and the New York property, that of the Press Publishing Company, which included *The World*. The testator expressly authorized sale in the one case, but apparently forbade it in the other, and this in the following terms:

I particularly enjoin upon my sons and my descendants the duty of preserving, perfecting,

and perpetuating *The World* newspaper (to the maintenance and upbuilding of which I have sacrificed my health and strength) in the same spirit in which I have striven to create and conduct it as a public institution from motives higher than mere gain, it having been my desire that it should be at all times conducted in the spirit of independence and with a view to inculcating high standards and public spirit among the people and their official representatives, and it is my earnest wish that said newspaper shall hereafter be conducted upon the same principles.

It may be that the Surrogate's interpretation gained in impressiveness, as is not unusual, by contrast with the mere ingenuity of counsel's arguments. Law, like music, knows how to recommend the obvious and commonplace by a preface of the discordant and disagreeable. At any rate, when we deduct the precedents cited, and strip away preliminaries, the judgment stood for the living possessors and all against the dead hand. The Surrogate said he preferred to place his "determination" on broad grounds and on the powers of a court of equity, in emergencies, to protect the beneficiaries of a trust from serious loss or a total destruction of a substantial asset of the corpus. Besides, he said; Pulitzer was a father first and an editor afterwards:—

A man of his sagacity and business ability could not have intended that from mere vanity, the publication of the newspapers with which his name and efforts had been associated, should be persisted in until the entire trust asset was destroyed or wrecked by bankruptcy or dissolution. His expectation was that his New York newspapers would flourish. Despite his optimism, he must have contemplated that they might become entirely unprofitable and their disposal would be required to avert a complete loss of the trust asset.

The Court accordingly held that there was no prohibition of disposal, that the trustees had general power and authority to act, and that the Court should authorize the exercise of such authority. As for the precise sale proposed, it had no power, and whether there were conflicting offers made no difference.

It must have been an anguished group, a hundred souls in all, that waited all day long for the promulgation of the Surrogate's decision. Only five days remained before the sale terms matured, and these hundred employees, representing more than twenty times their number, were hoping against hope, either that legal approval would be withheld, or that there would be some encouragement for accepting a firm offer of purchase made on behalf of the staff themselves.

From forenoon the decision was postponed till dusk, and then from dusk till later, so it was not till midnight that the result of the inquiry was known. It was out of the question for the Surrogate to read a lengthy document at such an hour, and therefore the twenty-one page pamphlet was published like a blue-book, to be eagerly seized and searched for the all-important ruling at the end. There, on the fifth floor of the Hall of Records—the only lighted portion of a huge building otherwise plunged in darkness—copies were rushed from the Court to the waiting crowd upon the landing, and agency men flashed the news abroad, just as if it were a murder verdict—

*Court Permits Sale Declines Adjudicate  
Respective Bids.*

Lindsay Parrott, one of the youngest and ablest members of *The World* corps of writers, dashed to the office and typed out his last "signed-story" to recount the result. And distracted groups of men and women stood around him while he wound up the dismal epilogue of *The World* for its "Final." It meant that 2,867 employees upon the three papers, save for the handful that the new

owners could absorb, were turned into the street with the slenderest of prospects in a market already choked with unemployment and indiscriminate ruin

The disappearance of such a powerful agent for public integrity and international goodwill is recognized on every hand as no slight calamity, and raises many misgivings as to the future of non-utilitarian organs—the few that are left. That fine spirit and great editor, the late Sir Mutland Park, justly said that the all-important problem in these days was not how to “make the world safe for democracy,” as President Wilson put it, but how to make democracy safe for mankind. To this he might very well have added that in a conflict for civilization like this, the Press in many of its phases and emanations has been too apt to hinder as much as it helps, especially in a “newspaper-ridden” country like the United States. Close observers have had scathing things to say concerning the misdirected power of a great section of the American Press—and not the American Press alone, be it said—its efforts to please the electorate and terrify men in office, its tendency to manipulate news and interpret it in terms of interest and propaganda, its ease in shirking responsibility, and

its tyranny over public opinion in a variety of ways, usually with studied ingenuity and intensive ability, and all too often with entire impunity. Unfortunately, as the late Viscount Bryce pointed out, the very extent of the United States, while it limited the mischief of any one organ to its own immediate area in regard to domestic affairs, left it potent for evil in the sphere of foreign relations. Moreover, the extension of the syndication system of recent years has made Bryce's indictment all the truer, to a degree that the critic could have hardly foreseen when he wrote it in 1921.

But Bryce might safely have lodged important exceptions here and there, and given credit for meritorious action which must have come under his own view. He might, for instance, have recalled the wise and courageous way in which Joseph Pulitzer and *The World* intervened at a time when the Venezuela boundary dispute came to a perilous climax, and brought Great Britain and the United States into an attitude of mutual defiance that is difficult to conceive to-day. In 1895 Ireland's troubles had for years been employed in the West for the purpose of "twisting the lion's tail," and the Monroe doctrine was invoked with exasperating in-

sistence and effect among a section of the populace that was all too ready to regard this country with ill-will.

The House of Representatives voted unanimously and lavishly for a one-sided Commission, and President Cleveland signed the resolution the same day. Important New York papers demanded the co-operation of the Russian and French navies in the event of war, and characterized as "flabby hucksters" all Americans who regarded war as a calamity to be averted. Day after day *The World* denounced this invocation to hostilities as a "colossal crime," and when opponents cited a law which punished "correspondence or intercourse with any foreign government with an intent to influence any controversy with the United States," Pulitzer printed the text of the statute with contempt, and condemned it as "obsolete and forgotten until resuscitated by the zeal and watchfulness of Senator Olney."

The excuse for such recourse to punitive legislation was that Pulitzer had taken the unusual course of appealing direct to the highest public opinion in this country. It was an early example of broadcast at its best. He sent lengthy cables to our public men of all parties



and creeds, and printed their prepaid replies day by day until it was impossible to maintain the fallacy of "British jingoism" any longer. Mr. Gladstone, for instance, declined to interfere in such a crisis with the official policy of a great opponent like Lord Salisbury, but added: "Only common sense is necessary." Our Foreign Secretary sent word through his secretary that arbitration was impossible, for matters had gone too far. But Sir Francis (afterwards Lord) Knollys, on behalf of the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York (King Edward and his present Majesty), thanked Pulitzer for his message, and replied in the following admirable terms:

They earnestly trust, and cannot but believe, the present crisis will be arranged in a manner satisfactory to both countries, and will be succeeded by the same warm feeling of friendship which has existed between them for years.

Meanwhile *The World* was disproving Secretary Olney's offensive message point by point. To have said that "the United States is to-day practically sovereign in this continent and its fiat is law, was dangerous and gratuitous nonsense so long as Canada, Chili, Mexico, and Brazil denied any such jurisdiction, and so long as the United States Government was

'sovereign' inside its own borders but nowhere else on earth." This sturdy stand for common sense and common honesty, in the face of a frenzied outcry all over the United States, had its due result in the end, and the disaster of war was mercifully avoided. When the episode and its risks had subsided, the peace societies of this country honoured Pulitzer with an address of thanks inscribed on vellum, and drew from the invalid an explicit declaration of his principles and views which deserves to be committed to memory by all who are zealous for progressive international relations.

Much might be said to show that this was only one of a long succession of services rendered to civilization during the three decades of Pulitzer's editorial control. Cleveland confessed openly that without the paper's assistance he and the Democrat party could never have won their way to power, but his letter of acknowledgment met with the plain rejoinder that *The World* was not a party paper. In later years it praised Mr. Roosevelt for his sound appointments and his settlement of a great coal strike, but when he took high-handed action in regard to the Panama scandals, the paper attacked him hip and

thigh. It also bore the brunt of harsh and vindictive official action until the case was carried to the Supreme Court and a decision obtained in the paper's favour, not without considerable cost. These and other instances may stand as examples of what *The World* continued to do in the cause of sound government and national well-being. They also show what one man, afflicted with the terrible disability of blindness, could do in the way of rescuing a newspaper debilitated by evangelistic aims and methods. He raised it to a high level of influence by virtue of disinterested statesmanship and undaunted courage in the assertion of his views. Such determined optimism as his, expressed as it always was with a virile and resourceful pen, must have been founded on an implicit faith in the destinies of his country; and yet there must have been doubt deep-seated in his heart as he surveyed the future of a paper actuated by such difficult ideals, when deprived of the inspiration and incentive he had endowed it with as its creator. And though there is no such admission in the trust-deeds that he drafted for its maintenance, he must have known that the burden of the "dead hand" is the heaviest of handicaps for so delicate an instrument as

a daily paper, especially when its opinions are inconvenient to capital and power

There was never yet an actuary equal to calculating the life-expectation of a great journal, either in the New World or the Old, and the reasons are not far to seek. When the classic philosopher said that man was a tripod depending on the soundness of head, heart, and lungs, he was furnishing us with a shrewd parable for the uncertain existence of a modern paper, resting as it does on the three elements of contents, advertisements, and circulation, and none of them assured without an expenditure of skill and enterprise far beyond the conception of its average reader. Change is the law of growth, and the adage is truer than ever in regard to the newspaper of to-day, its control, its constitution, and its chances. Nor can it be anything but a reproach to logic and sense to expect that an institution which undertakes to shape men's minds according to the day's admonitions and occurrences, should be exempt from the rough-and-ready decrees of evolution it is expounding day by day. Journalism, like politics, but in a more explicit degree, is the correlation of ideas and events, and the wisest man is he who keeps an open mind. The late Herbert Spencer showed this

wisdom when, at the close of his *Autobiography*, he declared himself content to abide by the laws of the evolutionary philosophy he had spent his career in unfolding, and to admit that his own disciples and their conclusions must inevitably supersede him in course of time, as they in their turn must be prepared to find themselves superseded by others. Similarly, the late Sir Josiah Mason, when he founded the science college which was to prove the nucleus of Birmingham University, expressly declined to cripple its future by too strict a formulation of his own ideas as to its final constitution and development. And if such caution and restraint were salutary in regard to a concrete teaching foundation with a comfortable endowment behind it, they must needs be still more necessary in the shaping of so volatile and complex a creation as a daily paper.

If anyone entertains a doubt of this, let him look round and note how deplorable has been the mortality among the daily papers of London in the past twenty years. Yet the number of readers has increased by leaps and bounds, partly owing to the War, and partly to the astonishing way in which the modern journal has invaded fields of interest unknown to

newspaper readers of a previous generation. May we not say of newspapers, however, as of empires, that the extension of their territory only brings fresh anxieties and dangers? The very public they have reared on so lavish a diet shows the effects of any surfeit in the insistence and the clamour of its demands, and, may one add? in its cool ingratitude for favours received. Only a newspaper office knows how callously the pushing public man leaves his conscience behind him when he enters, and leaves his character behind him when he departs. This and much more in the way of disillusion must often strike those who are responsible for the conduct and advancement of a great daily paper, and make them feel, as Greville says in one of Landor's *Conversations* concerning all public servants: "We serve in a tavern where every hour is dinner-time, and pick a bone upon a silver dish."

If Pulitzer could revisit these glimpses of the moon, and see the paper of his creation flung upon the scrap-heap, he would find a theme for eloquence surpassing anything that ever came to him in the course of his strenuous and difficult career. Yet he might find consolation elsewhere, say, in the success of the School

of Journalism he founded in Columbia University. The value of academic instruction in regard to so highly technical a vocation has often been debated, and the emphasis, if not the victory, has usually rested with the oracle who proclaims that journalism can only be taught in a newspaper office and nowhere else. Let those who are susceptible to fair arguments and fresh impressions read the apologia that Pulitzer printed in the *North American Review* in 1904, and they will realize the wealth of personal character and experience he had brought to the adjudication of this question before he made himself the almoner of so much generosity. The plea that journalists are "born, not made," he mildly said, was said of poets long ago; but if it were true, why were editorial chairs assigned to men of maturity and experience, and why was *Hamlet* the nineteenth play of Shakespeare and not his first? Surely, sound initial teaching is as vital as ultimate experience, and neither proprietor nor public ought to be called upon to bear with the callow efforts of every novice with the pen. Whether the lecturers in the course of instruction were experts in constitutional history and usage, or master craftsmen in the intricacies of newspaper production, the learner

would be none the worse, and probably all the better, for having pitfalls indicated, studies directed, and aptitudes developed. Such arguments as these call for no refutation, and even if Pulitzer's school and scholarships have turned out no shining celebrity in journalism, they must have leavened America's present-day journalism in more ways than can be individually traced. The deduction is a fair one, at any rate, and two convictions may be stated in conclusion. One is that if Pulitzer had lived, America's public life and trade would be more wholesome than at present. The other is that if Fleet Street ever acquires a Valhalla worthy of the name, some replica of Sargent's noble picture of the man should assuredly find an honoured place in it.

[AUTHOR'S NOTE.—Since the above was written and in type—from material collected at the time—the old *World* staff have compiled an omnibus volume with the same title as this essay. It is to be highly commended as an interesting instance of newspaper narrative from the inside point of view, and its publication is creditable to the enterprise and courage of the firm of Harper.]



# LONDON IN A FINANCIAL FOG

*By A. Edward Newton*

## I

**H**AD I been told a year ago that the time would come when I should be glad to leave London, I should have said with Dr. Johnson: "Sir, no man at all intellectual is willing to leave London. No, sir, when a man is tired of London he is tired of life." But we are living in a world of change, and if the changes are for the better, tell me so and attempt to prove it.

Three times within two years I have been called to London to do honour, in my small way, to the memory of Dr. Johnson. The first was in November, 1929, just when the first crash in Wall Street made my investments look as though made by an idiot acting under the advice of a lunatic. I was fortunate that I could get away, and perhaps I should not have gone, but some years before, when I was dining with my friend Cecil Harmsworth in

the Johnson House in Gough Square, he had told me that when he was ready to turn the house over to a board of governors, to have the management of it for ever, I should be one of two Americans he had in mind for the honour—my friend R B Adam, of Buffalo, the ranking Johnsonian of the world, being the other. I, of course, expressed my appreciation of the honour and said that when the call came I would be on hand. It came, as I have said, at the height of the stock-market crash, one of those things that our Federal Reserve Bank was supposed to prevent. I was glad to have so good an excuse for folding my tent like an Arab and stealing away.

The event was a delightful one. It took the form, as so many events do in London, of an elaborate dinner party, given by Mr Harmsworth to the trustees and governors in the attic room of the house in which the great Dictionary was compiled and in which, probably, *Rasselas* was written. In addition to the group whose duties were to be honorary rather than burdensome—for the burdens had been assumed by Mr Harmsworth—our host had invited some of the members of the Johnson Club and a few personal friends. We dined

wisely and well, and after the dinner a group of ladies, who had in the meantime been Mrs. Harmsworth's guests at the near-by Cheshire Cheese, climbed the substantial old stairs to hear the speeches which are inevitable on such an occasion.

The first speaker was my old and honoured friend Augustine Birrell. "An old parliamentary hand"—as Gladstone once called himself—he can be gritty upon occasion; I have known him to toss and gore several people of an evening, but this evening he was in mellow and reminiscent mood and spoke delightfully. After he had sat down, Mr. Harmsworth, to my horror and surprise, said: "Now, Ned, I turn the meeting over to you." Among the trustees was Lord Hewart, the Chief Justice of England, one of the best after-dinner speakers in London. It is not usual for so unimportant a person as myself to speak before (in advance of) the Lord Chief Justice, and I apologized for doing so by saying that I had come much farther for my dinner than he had—and little else. My apology was accepted, a whimsical note from Sir James Barrie read (he was at the last minute prevented from attending), much port was drunk, more speeches made, and toward midnight the old

mansion was emptied of its living Johnsonians and turned over to its Ghosts

## II

My next visit to London was upon the occasion of my election to the presidency of the Johnson Society of Lichfield, Dr Johnson's native town. I owe this honour to Lord and Lady Charnwood, whom I had met several years before upon the celebration of one of Dr Johnson's birthdays, which are scrupulously observed in the old Staffordshire city. This honour, like the other, does not involve one in a maze of duties. Nomination by Johnsonians so distinguished as Lord and Lady Charnwood is equivalent to and is immediately followed by election. Then one functions in placing a wreath on Johnson's statue in the tiny public square in the city, in visiting the birthplace which is in the square, and in joining in the singing of anthems by white-robed choristers from the near-by church. In these festivities, which take place at noon, the Mayor of the City and the Sheriff, in their robes, take part, this puts the needed bit of colour into a simple ceremony, and nothing further happens until three in the afternoon, when, in the

Guildhall. the election of officers for the ensuing year takes place, and after the reading of a few brief reports the newly elected president makes his formal address.

When I discovered what was expected of me I determined to develop an idea which had been rattling about in my head for many years. Dr. Johnson and Dr. Franklin lived in London at the same time, they had many friends in common, but I could not discover that they had ever met; I feel sure that they did not. I determined to bring them together at the dinner table of Mr. Strahan, the printer. To a Johnsonian it is instantly obvious that I had taken my cue from Mr. Dilly's famous party to John Wilkes, to which Boswell enticed Dr. Johnson.

The moment I had set my stage I was embarrassed by the wealth and quality of my material: I set two of the ablest talkers of the age—two of the ablest talkers of any age—talking against each other in perfect key with their respective characters. The one a Tory, and what we should to-day call a fundamentalist; the other a Republican and a free-thinker. That Johnson would hate Franklin was obvious; that Franklin would find in Johnson a foeman, of whom it behooved him to be

very careful was equally apparent. I think I never had more fun than in matching up in perfect apposition the well-known sayings of these two great men. With Boswell, General Paoli, and a rather shadowy French Ambassador to ask a pertinent question now and then, I set the two men at one another—the result was very like the setting off of a bunch of firecrackers.

I read my paper to a somewhat surprised, yet sympathetic audience. Only one man went to sleep, but he did so upon my wife's shoulder, and was subsequently roundly taken to task by Lady Charnwood for so doing, and in the evening there was a dinner in the Guildhall, and another milestone in the ever-lengthening fame of Dr Johnson had been passed. It is usual for presidents to be present at the election of their successors, and I promised that I would, if possible, return to Lichfield a year later to see mine properly installed. And that is why I found myself, a year later, once again in Lichfield dancing attendance upon the newly elected president, Sir Anthony Hope Hawkins, the creator of a new (now old) school of fiction, the author of *The Prisoner of Zenda*. Sir Anthony is an ardent Johnsonian, and made a capital address,

On these occasions Stowe House, the country home of the Charnwoods, radiates hospitality. It is a comfortable, historic mansion, surrounded by lovely old lawns and gardens, about a mile from the city of Lichfield, at the end of a long artificial sheet of water, and so placed that from its front door and central window above one may look across the water straight through the centre opening of the centre spire of the Cathedral. It is a soul-satisfying view, and it is to this house that Dr. Johnson walked away to dine in March, 1776, leaving Boswell rather disconsolate at the inn. But let the story be abridged from Boswell's own words:

I had seen Mrs. Gastrel (who then occupied Stowe House) the preceding night, and when Johnson walked away without any apology I wondered at this want of manners from a man who has no difficulty in carrying a friend to a house where he is intimate. . . .

I began to think myself unkindly deserted but was soon relieved, and convinced that my friend instead of being deficient in delicacy had conducted the matter with perfect propriety, for I soon received a note in his handwriting: "Mrs. Gastrel at the lower house on Stowhill desires Mr. Boswell's company to dinner at two." I was not informed till afterwards that Mrs. Gastrel's husband was the clergyman who, while he lived at Stratford-upon-Avon, where he was the pro-

prietor of Shakespeare's garden, with Gothic barbarity cut down his mulberry tree, and, as Dr Johnson told me, did it to vex his neighbours. His lady, I have reason to believe, on the same authority, participated in the guilt of what the enthusiasts of our immortal bard deem a species of sacrilege.

At least three of the rooms of Stowe House remain just as they were at the time of Johnson's and Boswell's visit, and a large mirror let into the wall of the dining-room must have many times reflected the ponderous Doctor as he laboured over his dinner. But the literary history of Stowe House does not end with Mrs Gastrel and her guests. Subsequently it became the home of that amazing and amusing eccentric, Thomas Day, and in it he wrote the once-famous *Sandford and Merton*.

We were a merry party over the week-end of the nineteenth of September. Sir Anthony told stories and told them well, and Lady Hawkins, a handsome woman, a perfect type of English countrywoman, in reply to what I thought was a well-turned compliment to this effect, countered very neatly when I got through by saying: "Thank you very much, but I was born in Vermont."



## III

It has so happened that I have been in London on a number of occasions when events of great importance were unfolding. This time, on the day after our arrival, careful reading of the newspapers made it clear that England's difficulties seemed to be coming to a head. Immense sums of gold were being withdrawn from the Bank of England for shipment abroad, and whispers were heard of the "flight" of the pound sterling. The King, who had only just arrived at Balmoral Castle, in Scotland, returned to London the next day by special train to attend a hastily called meeting of his ministers, and immediately thereafter announced through his Chamberlain that he proposed to forego, annually, fifty thousand pounds of his income while the financial stringency lasted. This is a large sum of money for a man who is not very rich and who is, nevertheless, obliged to support establishments worthy of the King of Great Britain and Emperor of India. At the same time the Prince of Wales, who enjoys no income from the civil list, made a personal contribution of ten thousand pounds. These announcements were made to synchronize with an appalling

statement from Mr. Snowden, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the House of Commons that the expenses of the government were far in excess of its receipts and that the deficit must be met by increased taxation and an immediate reduction in the nation's expenses. A gasp and a groan went up throughout the Kingdom.

Such was the situation when, on a Friday afternoon, we left London for Lichfield. For many years I have always kept a few hundred pounds on deposit with a century-old bank in the City. I debated whether I should close this account and remit my pounds by cable to New York, or take a ride with them where-soever they might go. This seemed to be the sporty thing to do, I did it, and I am still "riding" with my pounds. I also determined that I would not look at the newspapers until the Lichfield festivities were over. When I came down to breakfast on Monday morning, September 22, I saw instantly from the faces of those about me that something serious had happened. The *London Times*, the one-time "Thunderer," in common with all the other papers, announced that the Bank of England would that day suspend payment, in gold, at the usual rate of exchange, that the London

stock market would not open, and that this lead would be followed by the stock exchanges of Berlin and several other Continental cities. I knew instantly what the effect would be in New York. I guessed that our stock exchange would brace itself for whatever might happen and remain open at whatever cost; indeed, there was little choice—it would be obliged to do so.

When the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street, as the Bank of England has affectionately been called, lays down her knitting, folds her hands, and goes off into a doze, something is bound to happen. With us, transactions made outside the exchange cannot be enforced; in London, there is always a "street market." Exchange on New York fell on that miserable Monday from \$4.86 to \$3.45 and closed at \$3.90 to the pound. When it is realized that the fluctuation of a penny in the pound causes a foreign-exchange banker trepidation, it will be realized that such a fluctuation develops either a weak or a very stout heart.

The English are, in general, good sports, none better; we are not in the same class with them. We are belly-aching over twelve months' misery. The English people, under incompetent political control, have had five years of it. The newspapers said that "con-

structive measures " had been taken, hoped that it was not too late—as is usually the case with their constructive measures—and implied that they would " muddle through " Whoever first invented this phrase did England a great disservice, for in order to live up to the tradition of " muddling through "—and tradition is a rule of conduct in England—the English never prepare for an emergency, but when it comes they face it like a lion

Now, curiously enough, I had happened to be in London some years before when exchange on New York fell, as I remember, to \$3 20 to the pound The English seemed unperturbed and said it would go lower I know nothing of foreign exchange—few men, even bankers, do—especially of that mystery called triangular exchange, in which goods shipped from New York to Hong Kong are settled for in London, but I felt sure that London would endeavour to raise the value of the pound nearer to the parity of the dollar, and I bought substantially Then, having pounds in London, I invested in what was, and is, briefly called " war loan " I sat down to wait To my surprise and, I may add, intense gratification, pounds began to go up, or dollars to go down, which is the same thing

Presently—and unwisely, as I have always believed—the old parity of \$4.86 to the pound was re-established. How it was done I never understood, but those “in the know” must have made huge fortunes.

The statesman who is credited for this *tour de force* is Winston Churchill, the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time. May I say in passing that he is not as universally respected as is Philip Snowden, the Chancellor of the late Labour Government. I suppose no two men in England hate each other more cordially than these two ex-Chancellors, and I believe Napoleon at Waterloo felt not a whit worse than did Mr. Snowden when the pound came crashing down about his head, for Napoleon cared for nothing but self, and Snowden would go and has gone through hell for his convictions. The effect of a fall of 20 per cent in the pound is equivalent to a tariff of that amount, with this difference: that it produces, directly, no revenue. Now Snowden and John Burns are perhaps the only two distinguished statesmen who still believe that a free trade is essential to England's well-being; and thereby hangs another tale.

It is said in London, very openly, that a well-known politician did something very

naughty in connection with the sugar tariff, which resulted in the fact that enormous profits were reaped and shared by certain interests at the expense of the common people, and the mere mention of a far-flung tariff is enough to bring Philip Snowden in a towering rage to his feet. He is a very frail man, always in bodily pain, and rises reluctantly. It must have been an agonizing moment for him when he brought in and had passed his last Bill, increasing the already crushing taxes on incomes and reducing somewhat the dole and the salaries or wages of certain public servants, thus, as he said, "balancing the budget"—at least on paper. It was, in effect, a confession of complete failure. The Labour Party and the Conservative Party alike have been unable to deal with unemployment. The glowing promises of both had come to naught, yet so determined, so obstinate, so opposed to change is English character that the mere suggestion of a tariff, which has worked amazingly well in the building up of the automotive industry in England, is nevertheless sufficient to bring ruin to its proposer. The policy of free trade which made England rich and powerful a hundred years ago must be the right policy to-day. so ran the argument.

I can but feel that the speech in Parliament in which Mr. Snowden practically admitted that England had reached the end of her tether, and that increased taxes and wage reductions were a necessity, was ill-considered. A magnificent peroration with an apt quotation from Swinburne did not serve to prevent a mutiny—a strike it was called—in the Navy, and the Navy is England's first and last line of defence. No one really knows how serious it was; the newspapers said as little as possible. Ramsay MacDonald rose to the great emergency and—perhaps under the promptings of the King, who I verily believe is to-day the most universally honoured man in the world—offered to “head up,” as we should say, a National Party. Henderson and most of the Labour leaders “deserted”—how the English hate a quitter!—and Lloyd George ran true to form and availed himself of what I think may be his last opportunity of being contemptible.

## IV

I have attempted, very briefly and imperfectly, to suggest conditions in London when I took my usual flat in Jermyn Street with the intention of doing a little book hunting, din-

ing with friends, and going to the theatre, but I soon discovered it was no time for any of these things. The only thing that I could do was to read the papers and try to understand what was going on. London was no longer "My Old Lady London," but a rather exacerbated old gentleman with jumpy nerves.

Like most other men, I have come to have but little, if any, respect for authority. This may be due to the fact that I have grown up, or to an early reading of Thomas Carlyle. In any event, man is, to me, pretty generally a forked radish and nothing more. As Charles James Fox replied when someone called his attention to the magnificent gravity of Lord Chancellor Thurlow, "No man ever was as wise as Thurlow looks." So I decline to respect a man merely because he wears ecclesiastical, religious, or military trappings—even a horsehair wig only abashes me for a moment. It follows then, quite naturally, that when political economists come forward with their always-conflicting remedies for difficult situations I prepare to enjoy the "comic relief," as it is called when fun is introduced in a tragedy upon the stage. The Dogberrys, disguised as wise men, who now crowded forward with their silly plans for the relief of unemploy-



ment and the stabilization of the pound, brought to mind our own absurd efforts to keep up the price of wheat, Brazil's futile attempt to do the same thing with coffee, and the sequel to the effort made by Britain to force us to pay her war bill by cornering the rubber market.

It would not be inexact, I think, to say that an "eminent" economist is always wrong. No two have ever agreed as to money, either gold or silver or paper, wages, credits, tariffs, or anything else; yet they remain "eminent," and men listen to them, as who should say an oracle has spoken. The war, in 1914, gave them their great chance, and they were quick to embrace it. We had one at the University of Pennsylvania. His name I forget; he was an old man and he married a child—which, as Sir Peter Teazle says, is a crime that carries its own punishment. It certainly did in his case. Well, he came out one day—I remember it well—with a pronouncement that the war would last only a short time, that the financiers of the world would not permit it; that there was not money enough in the world, that money would be in demand, hence it would "go up"; that one's real estate and shares, and so forth, should immediately be

sold, and everything should be turned into money. I read his screed carefully and said to myself: "If this economist is right, I am a ruined man, but I feel sure he is wrong." What happened? Within a year money was the cheapest thing in the market, and the war lasted four years and over.

England has been confronted by a condition for more than a generation, and she has met it with theories. When she was in a position to do the manufacturing for the world, she had practically a monopoly of three essentials—coal, iron, and cheap and intelligent labour. What she then required was cheap food, free trade gave it her. But when America entered the manufacturing game, as did Germany, France, and Belgium, and every country save England protected itself with tariffs, she became the dumping ground of the world. Joe Chamberlain, thirty years ago, read the handwriting on the wall and came out strongly for protection, but he was out-manœuvred by the free traders. The very word "protection" became anathema.

A generation passed, and Stanley Baldwin slowly became converted to the idea, but not to the word. I remember seeing a cartoon of Mr Baldwin looking in a dictionary for a

word; asked what he was looking for, he replied: "I am looking for a word which means 'protection' but does not say so." The word "safeguarding" was found and adopted, and "safeguarded industries" were said to be, not protected, but "sheltered." The automotive industry was "sheltered" and prospered; this especially enraged the free traders, as it ruined their theories. I have always believed that Lloyd George, as agile and unscrupulous as a cat on a back fence, would have come out for protection some years ago, as a result of his visit to America, but when, on his return, he found that Mr. Baldwin had beat him to the issue and had come out flat-footedly for "safeguarding," he, Lloyd George, his hold on "the masses" and his power of invective unabated and unequalled, so ridiculed the idea that Baldwin was forced to drop it.

So England drifted on year after year, living on her fat, as has been said, each year becoming poorer, but, seemingly, more than ever convinced that free trade was her only hope. Indeed, it was not much over a year ago that Sir George Paish, the Governor of the London School of Economics and author of the entirely neglected *Road to Prosperity*, came forward and staked his reputation—whatever that may

be worth—that the whole world would be free trade within five years. The election held in England in the autumn of 1931 certainly does not point that way.

When economic doctors disagree as to what remedy to apply in a difficult situation, a mere book collector and a has-been business man may be forgiven for being in a fog and asking a few questions. Why is it, I have asked my English friends, that a tariff which seemingly works so well in Belgium and Denmark—both small, densely populated countries—cannot be made to work in England?

“Why, you see,” comes the reply, “we are an island, aren’t we?”

I admit it, but ask is it not, perhaps, because London bankers do not care much whether the bills of exchange which they toss about with such skill represent profits to their makers, so long as there are bills to toss about. In other words, London is a banking and shipping centre, her interests clash with those of the manufacturers who are scattered over the north of England, and London has known what she wanted and how to get it for centuries. Do we not see the same cleavage developing in this country? Do not the bankers of New York, who have sold several thousand million

dollars' worth of worthless bonds, want the protecting tariffs of this country reduced so that foreign countries shall prosper and be able to make their bonds good? These men, who confess and call themselves bankers, are indeed, many of them, only thugs in disguise. It takes a certain amount of intelligence to make an actor, or even a clergyman, but a crook can wear a stern expression and accustom his head to a silk hat, and we go to him for "securities," and get them in the form of worthless bonds and stock. I did not get my share, but I make no complaint.

Our present tariffs may be too high—I know nothing about it; but with England talking of a tariff of 100 per cent while the matter is being discussed, it does not look so. The tariff is a business matter and should be taken out of politics; let prohibition—the issue which both parties are trying to dodge and the only one in which I am interested—take its place. Conflicting business interests will each employ their own statisticians and economists, and they will arrive at diametrically opposite conclusions. To state the matter concretely, can anyone imagine Albert H. Wiggin's expert, representing the Chase National Bank, reaching the same conclusion as Gerard Swope's,

representing the General Electric Company? Or does anyone suppose that, when some fool governor wants to commit some crime in the name of reform, he is unable to secure from his attorney-general an assurance that his course is in strict accordance with the law?

## v

On Saturday, September 19, at twelve noon, while I was watching my old friend, "His Worship," the Mayor of Lichfield, hanging a wreath on Dr Johnson's statue, the Bank of England closed its doors, never to open them again, as I believe, with the pound sterling at the old rate of exchange. When the doors closed, the pound was worth \$4 86 in New York, when the doors opened several days later it was worth \$3 45. I still had mine, and felt more than an academic interest in the matter.

Late one afternoon, as I was sitting toasting my feet by the fire, there was a knock on the door of my little sitting-room, and a prominent London banker entered. He looked tired, whereupon, opening a closet door, I called attention to its contents. "I have," I said, "two bottles of port, one of sherry, a bottle of Scotch, half a bottle of brandy, and some

aspirin tablets. What will you have?" "A cup of tea," was his reply. And over our tea and thin bread and butter we talked. The pound had closed that day at \$3.90, he said, and no human being knew at what price it would open the next.

I never admired the English more than I did that afternoon. They are a proud race, and, by Saint George and the Dragon, they have a right to be! They are all beefeaters in a way, and, as the song goes:

The screw may twist and the rack may turn,  
And men may bleed and men may burn;  
O'er London town and its golden hoard,  
We keep our silent watch and ward.

But its golden hoard is now sadly diminished. Time was, when you went into a bank for a hundred pounds, you were asked if you would have it in gold or in notes; if you said gold, a man with a little brass scoop weighed, on a set of scales which stood on every banking counter, a certain number of sovereigns. The question will probably never be asked again, although "never" is a long word. The gold standard has passed to other nations which may not be able to use it so well for the stability of the world.

My friend was an intimate friend of Montagu Norman, the Governor of the Bank of England, who had only recently returned from Canada, just in time to see his life's work turn to ashes under his hand. I referred to the blunder, as I called it, of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's bringing the pound back to parity with the dollar, a few years before.

"Do you suppose," he said, "that that was the work of any one man? That step was taken after the most careful consultation with the ablest bankers in New York, including Benjamin Strong, now dead, the then Governor of the Federal Reserve Bank. It seems now to have been a mistake, but at the time it was thought the wise thing to do. When big men make mistakes, they make big ones, naturally." My friend did not stay long, it was gracious of him to call.

In all the circumstances, I felt the proper place for me was home. I had no difficulty in securing accommodations, and on Saturday I sailed. By a coincidence I had only a few dollars in American money and I determined to get some, but not a dollar in American money was to be had. I should not have supposed such a thing could happen to me in London, and while on this subject I might



say that the first thing that caught my eye on the bulletin board of my steamer was a notice which read: "Passengers are very politely requested to pay their steamer expenses in American money." Where, I inquired of the purser, were we to get it? And my sixpenny bottle of Bass was billed to me at seventeen cents—this on an English steamer, mark you. Not exactly cricket, what?

## VI

We say, loosely, that England has gone off the gold standard; internally, she has, but her foreign purchases must still be paid for in gold—only it now costs her about 25 per cent more to buy dollars or francs than it formerly did. That is her tragedy. And that brings up another question—the question of silver; and if there is a more controversial question, with the exception of prohibition, than the position of silver, I do not know of it.

For centuries silver was as good as gold for foreign exchange, at a ratio varying from 14 to 1 to 16 to 1. That is to say, one pound (troy weight) of gold was equal to fourteen (varying to sixteen) pounds of silver. The English pound originally meant a pound of silver, just

as a French *livre* meant a pound of silver. The French term is now obsolete, and an English pound meant, until a short time ago, \$4 86 in gold in New York. The night before I left London I found myself dining at the house of a friend upon whose table was some interesting plate, and "plate" in England means solid silver. After the ladies had left the table, a group of men drew their chairs together, port was passed, and someone, a young man, asked me if I was interested in silver.

I replied "Yes, but I have only a few good pieces, nothing like this"—waving my hand at some fine flat-top tankards.

"I don't mean plate," said my friend, "I mean silver—its position in the markets of the world."

I asked a simple question and my friend is even yet trying to make the matter clear to me. What I said was this: "We are told that the United States and France have the bulk of the world's gold. Why, then, did England permit China and advise India to go upon a gold standard, both countries having been from time immemorial on a silver basis?"

"Sheer stupidity," was the reply, "stupidity that was worse than a crime—and it may have been a crime, too. It was committed in White-

hall, where sit in luxurious chambers more Tite Barnacles [Tite Barnacle was, it will be remembered, a high official in the Circumlocution Office in *Little Dorrit*] than in any other area in the world. Delhi undoubtedly gave its assistance, too, and India has placed an import duty of  $37\frac{1}{2}$  per cent on silver. It must be undone, or the world will go smash. India is to-day selling, for a shilling and a penny an ounce, silver which we bought from you at the end of the war for four shillings and tuppence."

"That sounds dreadful," I said, "but don't let it worry you—you didn't pay for it."

"No, and never will."

"Now let me talk for a moment," I said, "on a subject of which I know nothing. I supposed that, as the United States produces most of the world's silver, England pushed India and China off a silver basis as an act of—shall I say of brotherly love? Sort of hands-across-the-sea, like."

"But you don't. Mexico is the great producer. You produce a lot, but Canada also produces silver. I have heard it said in the City," my friend went on to say, "that an Armenian corrupted some officials in China and India and made a colossal fortune thereby; it is inexplicable otherwise. Silver is the

money of Asia, with its teeming millions, obviously, if we decline to take the only money these millions have, they can't buy our goods. Look at our cotton industry. it is bleeding to death, and yet that miserable economist, Philip Snowden, said jestingly in the House of Commons some time ago that if every Chinaman would add an inch to his shirt tail it would immediately absorb all the cotton in Manchester "

"He was only quoting Mrs Gaskell in *Mary Barton*, maybe without knowing it," I said. "She makes one of her characters say. 'If every man in England had two shirts instead of one, there would not be enough shirts to go around'" But my friend had never heard of Mrs Gaskell's admirable political novel, and continued

"People talk about overproduction, with hundreds of millions of people starving and freezing all for the want of what we have too much of. I tell you our troubles are due to the lack of money, they will vanish when we recognize silver for what it is—money, as good as gold, when coined at the ratio of  $15\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 with gold. That was the formula adopted by your ancestor, Sir Isaac Newton, when he became the director of the Mint "

"I thought my ancestor, as you call him, Sir Isaac, was in the apple business," I replied.

"He was also director of the Mint, and his rule, a hundred years later, became known as the Law of Calonne. You remember him, of course?"

"Perfectly, perfectly," I said. "Who was he? The only Calonne I know anything about was the controller-general of the finances of Louis XVI, when he hadn't any."

"The Law of Calonne was that anyone bringing a kilo of gold to the French Mint could have it coined into one hundred and fifty-five discs, each of the value of twenty francs; or a pound of silver would be coined into forty discs, each of the value of five francs. You see,  $15\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 exactly. And the debtor could tender gold or silver, or both, and obtain quittance for his debt. That was the Law of Calonne."

It was getting too deep for me. I tried to change the subject; I steered towards safety. Pushing the decanter of port towards my friend, I made some observation from Dr. Johnson about claret being the drink for boys, port for men, and brandy for heroes—but my friend would not have it. "Your nation," he said, "almost alone among the great nations

of the world has attempted to do something for re-establishing silver in its proper position. There is not enough gold for the commerce of the world. Did you ever hear of William Jennings Bryan? "

Had I ever heard of William Jennings Bryan! And then my turn came. "Listen," I said. "Years ago, before you were born, the Democratic Party held a convention somewhere in the western part of the United States, at which time a candidate for the Presidency was to be nominated. A political convention is an assembly of the crooks and thugs of each party, in respect to which there is no difference between them, but the emblem which has been pinned upon the Democratic Party is a jackass, which is significant. Times were very hard, and, as always when times are hard, it was attributed to lack of money. It seems queer that when business is good there is always plenty of money and when it gets bad there isn't enough to go round.

"Anyway, every lunatic with a theory for setting the world right went to that Democratic Convention; and then, finally and at last, Bryan, a handsome young man with a magnificent voice, got up and made a speech, a good one, winding up with a purple patch. In a

voice which electrified his audience, he cried: 'I answer the banker's demand for gold by saying: "You shall not press down upon the brow of labour this crown of thorn! You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold!"' After that, there was nothing to do but nominate the orator for the Presidency. The Republicans claimed that if Bryan was elected debts contracted when a dollar was worth a hundred cents could, and would, be liquidated with a dollar worth fifty cents, and the nation would be ruined. McKinley, who ran against Bryan, tried to straddle the question. Like Mr. Baldwin, wanting a word that meant protection but did not say so, McKinley rolled his eyes to heaven and 'demanded that every dollar issued by these United States be as good as gold.'

"It was a bitterly contested campaign; even I took an interest in it. I stayed up all night waiting for the returns. A group of us went to the theatre, to see Anna Held, I remember. After the performance we walked the streets and presently the returns began to come in. All the saloons opened at midnight and all the stockbrokers kept open house. When it was found that McKinley was elected, joy was unconfined. I remember seeing in a stockbroker's

office the president of a long-established bank dancing a cancan in an advanced state of inebriation. Such sights were not unusual, there is a legend that I was seen trying to light a cigar at an electric bulb, and certainly, about dawn, four or five of us tried to go to sleep in one bed, which our host turned over to those of us who could get into it, while he dozed off very comfortably in a bathtub, with his clothes on. We roused him about noon next day, merely by turning on the water.

"So Bryan was right, after all, you say, and all this effort was wasted? I guess you are right. motley's the only wear, and all political enthusiasm is misplaced."

## VII

But every cloud has a silver lining. I read in the paper the day I left England that Winston Churchill, late Chancellor of the Exchequer, who had intended coming to this country to deliver fifty lectures for which he was to receive fifty thousand dollars, with all expenses paid, had had his contract cancelled. That is so much good money saved. The English regard us as a people to be lectured. Both Churchills, father and son, were over



here lecturing us a year ago. The son, a callow youth, would not have dared peep in England, but an Englishman will lecture us at the drop of a hat, and we—fools that we are—will drop a hat, even a good one, for the privilege of hearing him.

It is said of Democritus, the Laughing Philosopher, that he put out his eyes that he might not longer witness the frailties and follies of mankind. I would not be understood as recommending so extreme a course, but it might be well, occasionally, to close our eyes to the frailties and follies of others and in so doing lose sight of our own.

## HERMIT'S YEAR

### THE GREAT DERBY MYTH

*By J B Booth*

IT is a perfect legend, on the best old three-volume-novel lines, with a moral ending, a horrid warning, and an economic lesson

There is the rake-hell marquess, who steals the hero's bride, there is the hero, who achieves a poetic revenge by ruining his enemy on the racecourse, there is retribution—poetic justice enough to satisfy the sourest moralist. Small wonder that "The Story of Hermit's Derby, or, The Ruin of the Marquess of Hastings" has become a classic

Unfortunately the story is untrue in almost every particular. Hermit's Derby, heavy though were his losses, by no means ruined the Marquess of Hastings, and, far from exulting in his rival's defeat, no man could have behaved more generously than did Lord Chaplin

The late John Corlett, proprietor of the

*Sporting Times*, was an authority on what he loved to call "the Hastings era," and in his possession at one time was a mass of documents relating to it, including the Marquess's betting-books during the height of his "plunging." These documents, as he had a vague idea that a book might be written from them, Corlett lent to me in the early years of the century, but people concerned were still alive; from many points of view the subject was a delicate one, and the idea of a book was abandoned.

Several facts, however, emerged from the mass of letters and accounts. It must be remembered that "the Hastings era" was an age of heavy gambling and of spendthrifts—an age in which the resources of more than one noble house were crippled. Never has there been a period of such reckless plunging and general extravagance. Lord Hastings was not, as things went, a rich man. After a minority of twelve years, during which the accumulations amounted to £240,000, he succeeded to estates worth £20,000 a year, and for six years, thanks to his successes on the Turf, he lived at the rate of £100,000 a year.

Concerning no man has more nonsense been

written, many incidents in his career have been grossly exaggerated and his career on the Turf altogether misrepresented. The story of his losses, and especially of the £103,000 that was needed to settle his Derby account after the victory of Hermit, is constantly harped on, but nothing is said of his enormous wins over Lecturer's Cesarewitch and Vauban's Two Thousand Guineas. Much has been written of his disastrous purchase of Kangaroo—whom the imaginative writers persist in condemning to a hansom cab, whereas he was in fact killed in a steeplechase in Hampshire—but one hears nothing of his wise purchases of those magnificent horses The Duke at five hundred guineas and The Earl at fifty guineas less.

The documents I examined proved beyond doubt that even Hermit's year was not a losing one for the Marquess—but the Turf was the least of his extravagances. "My brains are worth £30,000 a year on the Turf," was the boast in one of his letters—and the boast was justified. And as to the "poetic revenge" theory of the romantic writers, a letter from the victor to his beaten opponent—a letter which Corlett always declared to be one of the most generous he had ever read—may be quoted.

9, Dover Street, Piccadilly,  
Sunday.

My dear Hastings,—I got your note last night. I ought to apologize for having ventured to ask Berkeley if he thought he might mention the subject, but I hope that, considering how perfectly immaterial an immediate settlement was to myself, and that under the circumstances it really might be a convenience to you, you would not think it impertinent on my part. I am only sorry my success should have been so disastrous to you, but certainly nobody in the world, after what had happened, could possibly have foreseen the result of the race, and I give you my word, when I was standing by you just before it, I had no more expectation of seeing Hermit win on that morning than even had yourself.

I am very truly yours,

HENRY CHAPLIN.

But the Turf winnings were quickly dissipated, money had to be borrowed, for the extravagance on cards and dice alone presaged ruin. The Marquess delighted in dice—throwing for £100 a time, tossing for £50 notes, and cutting cards at £200 the cut. In one evening in a West End club he won £20,400 at hazard; another evening he lost £70,000. Not even Lecturer or Vauban could keep him in funds to stand such losses, and the moneylender Padwick came upon the scene. Once he was in Padwick's clutches the end was in sight. The letters I went through dealing with this

stage of the Marquess's career were illuminating. His beautiful mare Athena won at Newmarket in the name and colours of Padwick. The Marquess wished to back her with £400, and Padwick cut down the amount by half. Before Goodwood there was trouble with a brother member of the Jockey Club, Mr Henry Savile. Padwick, in his letter, called him "Savill," from which one inferred that he held no bills or IOUs from Mr Savile. At that time at Goodwood if you owed a man money for bets he could stop your horse from running, and that was the threat that had been made. The matter seemed to have been arranged.

A curious feature of the correspondence was the airy way in which the Marquess referred to huge sums and the anxiety he displayed to have a tollgate-keeper squared. The man had been the victim of a practical joke, having had a sack of flour put over him. Perhaps the saddest letter was one from Padwick, who by this time had the Marquess completely in his power. It was undated.

A great friend of mine and member of the Jockey Club spoke to me privately to-day in reference to your remaining a member of the Jockey Club, and as he is so anxious to be spared

the pain of making any personal communication to you on the subject, I ventured to say that I would write you and suggest it would be much better you should at once send in your resignation.

The identity of the mutual friend is not clear. It may have been the Duke of Newcastle, who was a Steward, and himself had considerable dealings with Padwick. Later, when in the ordinary course he would have become Senior Steward, he, too, was forced to resign from the Club, and his crash, a year after Lord Hastings' death, roused even greater bitterness, the farmers and tenants being about to fling Padwick, whom they regarded as the Duke's evil genius, into the lake when he was so imprudent as to attend the sale at Clumber. But the friend was more likely to be the late Duke of Beaufort. The Duke and the Marquess were the two great masters when Danebury was at its zenith, and twice between them they only just missed the Derby.

The full story of the Hastings *débâcle* has never been written and probably never will be written, but that it was brought about by the victory of his rival's horse as a species of poetic revenge is a myth which has become a classic,

## THREE KENTISH MEMORIALS

By E V Lucas

**M**Y first swallows this spring—and I always make a note of the spot where they bless the eye—were skimming over a very green meadow with sheep and lambs in it, a little way from Sutton Valence, in Kent, whither I had gone to pay homage to the fame of Mr John Willes. Sutton Valence church is high on a Kentish ridge, and the Willes memorial—not tombstone, for he was buried elsewhere—is immediately to the left of the chancel as you enter from the village. It is a fine, solid piece of granite, not too legible, but with care you can acquire the words “To the memory of John Willes, Esq, of Bellringham, in this parish. Born 1777; died 1852, at Staunton, near Gloucester. He was a patron of all manly sports, and the first to introduce round-arm bowling in cricket. This memorial is erected by a few friends who remember him as a genuine sportsman, a



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staunch friend, a kindly neighbour, and a  
genial companion."

It was because of Willes's part in the evolution of bowling that I was there, the beginning of yet one more cricket season having incited me to a pious pilgrimage.

There is a mystery surrounding the early years of round-arm into which some day I mean to look; but although, no doubt, there were other experimentalists before him, one of whom was Tom Walker, of the Hambledon Club, in the 1790's, Willes was the first to be really proficient in the new style, and he had sufficient personality and authority to continue with it against opposition. That was from 1806 until 1822, when, being no-balled at Lord's (by Noah Mann, junior, son of Nyren's gipsy), he mounted his horse and, much as that gipsy would have done, flung out of the ground in a rage, and, it is said, never bowled again. Not until 1827 was round-arm permitted at Lord's, although it must have been tried all over the country, and, of course, had been the staple Sussex bowling for several years; but even after 1827 there was trouble.

From Sutton Valence I passed on to Thurnham, on the other side of Maidstone. Thurnham is an almost secret hamlet on the slope

beneath the Pilgrims' Way, with a great house, an inn, a few cottages, a field with an out-size scarecrow in it, and a pretty little church remote from the road. I went to Thurnham because here, in 1861, was buried that famous Man of Kent—indeed more than Man, for he was known as the Kentish Lion—the swiftest round-arm bowler of his time and the hardest hitter. Alfred Mynn, who put eighteen stone of English brawn behind every stroke and every ball

The tombstone is well cared for, shining within a dark green cavern made by the branches of a protecting yew tree. "His kindness of heart," I read upon it, "and generosity of disposition, during many years of public life as the champion of English cricketers, endeared him to a large circle of admiring friends." The great and glorious Alfred was dead before I was born, but I feel that I have known him all my life because his straw-hatted figure, in white, benign and gigantic, with one arm resting on his brother Walter's shoulder, was the most attractive of all in the group of Kent and Sussex cricketers and patrons, in the famous engraving of the match (at Brighton in 1847), which hung in a maple frame in our hall, and which in my earliest stages as an art critic and

connoisseur I could study only by standing on a chair. In the field itself you see Lillywhite, "The Nonpareil," in his tall hat, trotting up with the ball, Fuller Pilch waiting to receive it and deal with it, and behind him Thomas Box elegantly posed at the stumps: in fact, the crystallization of the game as in Lillywhite's own historic phrase: "Me bowling" (pronounced to rhyme with howling): "me bowling, Pilch batting and Box keeping wicket: that's cricket."

On Pilch's tomb—placed there in 1922 by the Kent County Cricket Club—is a very beautiful bronze relief of the old master at the wicket, most happily reconstructed from the drawing of him under the title "The Batsman" which our own Titian, George Frederick Watts, as a young and struggling artist, made for Pilch's and Mynn's friend and Kentish and Town Malling colleague, Mr. N. Felix, who also could tire the bowlers. The monument is a little way on the right as you approach the west doors of St. Gregory's, at Canterbury: a column rising from a square base, with inscriptions on the north and south surfaces which run thus: on the north: "Fuller Pilch, born at Horningcroft, Norfolk, March 17, 1803, died at Canterbury, May 1,

1870, aged 67 years", on the south "This monument was erected to the memory of Fuller Pilch by upwards of two hundred friends to mark their admiration of his skill as a cricketer and his worth as a man "

Fuller Pilch, who learned his cricket from William Fennex, one of the Hambledon men, played for England against Sussex in 1827 in one of the three matches to give round-arm an official trial, but in his early days he was chiefly concerned in single-wicket matches against various local champions, all of whom he beat. Thus in 1833 he defeated the great Thomas Marsden, of Sheffield, who was the fastest underhand bowler of his time, in the presence of twenty thousand spectators.

In 1835 the Town Milling Club offered Pilch a hundred a year to play for them, and he settled there until he moved to Canterbury to sell bits, play for Kent, and keep the Saracen's Head. It was in the Saracen's Head parlour that, in the 'sixties, Frederick Gale smoked a pipe with the old master, as described in *The Game of Cricket*. The talk running on Alfred Mynn's single-wicket matches against Dearman for the Championship of England in 1838, "Alfred," said Pilch, "was sleeping at Town Malling, and he called me into his bed-

room while he was dressing, and was standing without his shirt on, and he said: 'Fuller, do I look fit to play to-day?' Why, he looked fit to carry a church and a whole congregation round the town." The first match Mynn won by 112 runs; the return was played at Sheffield on August 27, when he won again, by an innings and 38 runs.

They must have been great spectacles, these single-wicket matches, and great trials of endurance for there were often no fieldsmen to assist. I wish they had not vanished. I could suggest some very good contests for the coming season.

And then on returning to London I climbed again to Highgate Cemetery, which I used to visit very often when, many years ago, I lived on the top of Dick Whittington's hill, but without the solace or encouragement of a cat, in order to see once more the grave of "The Nonpareil." This imposing but not inappropriate memorial, a broken column with a wreath around it, must have been undreamed of by the straightforward uncomplicated worthy who lies beneath it, the first of the Lillywhites: Frederick William, 1792-1854, better known as William: "One who did his duty," as part of the

lengthy inscription states, "in that state of life in which it had pleased God to call him", who taught, "both by precept and example, a sport in which the blessings of youthful strength and spirits may be most innocently enjoyed, to the exercise of the mind, the discipline of the temper, and the general improvement of the man " Little can the first supreme proficient of round-arm, the simple Sussex professional trotting up to the wicket, in his tall hat, in the famous engraving—little can he have foreseen this marmoreal testimony to his long service

# THE ENGLISH COUNTRY

## WHAT IS HAPPENING TO IT?

*By Hugh Walpole*

**B**Y an odd coincidence I am writing this in a Cornish fishing village whither I have returned after an absence of ten years. As a "mewling and puling" infant I played on the sands a mile away from here; as a young man with nothing in my pocket, my heart packed with ambition, I wandered here one wet evening, spoke to some fishermen with the result that I lived in this place for thirteen years, the most dramatic years of my life, for it was here that I learnt of my first success, here that I fell in love, here that, walking down the hot sunny village hill one August morning, I learnt that the Germans had invaded Belgium.

Now again I have returned. I had long sworn that I would not, because the stories that had reached my ears of the village's devastation were so horrible that I dared not

witness the horror with my own eyes But I returned . It was inevitable that I should, for, with the exception of one other spot of ground, this is the dearest to me in the world So back I came three days ago, and all the text of my subject lies here

This village was cut out of the rock centuries and centuries ago Since time began it has been the perfect example of the Tourist's Ideal, with its white cottages, rock of purple, orange, and silver, sea slashing the foundations of the houses and, in winter, overwhelming the cobbled streets Supremely beautiful in its homeliness, its isolation, its comforting friendliness When I came here in 1908 no one but a few old painting-ladies sought it out The station is miles away, there are hills to be climbed, there is no beach Or, earlier still, forty years back when I was six years old, we would come over in the "Jingle"—the pony-trap—for the day, with meat-and-bread pasties and bottles of ginger-beer and the hedges would smell of foxglove and dog-roses, the cliff would be scattered with sea-pink, the old church would look down at us from the hill, the world would be all our own

When I was a young man of twenty and came actually to live in Rafiel, there was still



"no change." From year's end to year's end we scarcely saw a visitor. Every night, weather being suitable, the twenty boats would lift their orange sails and set out under my windows with the little green shutters. For my cottage I paid six pounds a year. There were, even in 1911, only two motor-cars in the village. Still the old horse-bus ran to the nearest town and occupied an hour and a half in doing so. The village smelt of fish, talked fish, lived by fish—and it was a Paradise.

In 1911 Rafiel was a Paradise; in 1931 Rafiel is a Tourist Resort. From end to end of the village signs are hanging, "Ye Olde Something-or-Another"—"Ye Olde Dun Cow," "Ye Olde Crab-Pot," "Ye Olde Nookery," and on the face of one Horror, a screaming Horror with bright blue paint, its windows crammed with plaster-cast naked Venuses and spawn of poker-work, there is written up "Films—Food—Fun." Everywhere there are little new Villas, and in the window of every Villa there is a placard with these mystic words: "Bed and Breakfast." On the hill before you enter Rafiel, up over a gate of a field where the first primroses used to come, there is a large placard: "You May Park Here." And all down the road that was once

an avenue of elms, there are petrol stations. On Tuesdays and Thursdays the Charabancs come and the paths and walls are covered as though with flies. Special ice-cream—the best in the district—is to be bought under a white umbrella in the fish-market.

Making careful inquiries, I discovered that a certain Mr Fowler-Jones walked one day down the village street. “Ha! ha!” said Mr Fowler-Jones, “the very place for me!” So with an energy, self-confidence and impertinence quite unequalled in Rafiel history, he set about it, bought property here, opened shops with plaster-cast Venuses there, discovered comic facts and quaint stories in past Rafiel history and printed them on postcards, photographed the sea-gulls, made the fishermen with beards (not many of them left) stand in a row and be painted, put up petrol-stations, opened hotels and had a glorious time.

After a while he departed, leaving a cloud of debts behind him. Everyone was sad and regretful. It seemed that he was a bad man. But everyone in Rafiel has a kind heart. The old men are good-natured and, with justice, lazy, the young men have set their eyes on farther horizons. The evil work has been done—no one quite knows how.

And instead of the twenty boats with orange sails, I saw last night two large motor-propelled barges go rattling out into the white-clouded west.

"None of the young men go fishing any more. Don't pay like it used to do. Even if you catch the fish there ain't no price for them." Only my old friend John Curtis goes on. He loves the sea too dearly. Come what may he will go on to the end.

What is happening to Rafiel is happening over all the Southern Coast of England, is happening indeed over all the South of England. Cars, petrol-stations, electric-pylons—but why should I continue? Everyone knows. Many are distressed. Little is being done to arrest it.

In my own home, in the North of England, things are a little different. The Cumberland and Westmorland mountains and valleys defy, most of them, any very violent penetration. The whole of the North of England, north that is of the manufacturing towns, has space of turf, air, clouds and rain. Through the Cumberland district itself from Windermere to Keswick there is a great wide road with a fine surface and down this for some months of the year the cars rush in constant succession, but the very fact of this road

and others like it means that travellers move so swiftly that the country itself is untouched. Then there are the National Trust, the Society for the Preservation of England and other kindred Associations, all doing what they can that Beauty may not die.

But at the very word Beauty I am arrested. Alas, how priggish is its sound!

Once, and not so long ago, the life of England was, outside the towns, of a cloistered embalmed isolation. Read the Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth—that exquisite book—the Journal of Parson Woodforde, Jane Austen's novels, or, much later than these, Richard Jeffries, Mark Rutherford, "Henry Ryecroft," if you would know what that could be! And how beautiful in retrospect it seems! Listen to this little extract from Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal.

Monday morning a soft rain and mist. We walked to Ryedale for letters. The Vale looked very beautiful in excessive simplicity, yet at the same time, uncommon obscurity. The church stood alone, mountains behind. The meadows looked calm and rich, bordering on the lake. Nothing else to be seen but lake and island.

Yes, in retrospect how lovely! The old village street with the old villager leaning against the wall, the thick dark oak tree bend-

ing above the water-trough where the horse is led to drink, the village shop with its green bottle-windows and the assortment of liquorice, notepaper, shoe-laces and soap, the distant chime of the church clock, the old cottage bowered in roses. . . . Yes, very well for us who have means, leisure, an easy thirst for this same Beauty that our leisure demands as its food, but behind us, beyond us, what stagnation, ignorance, weariness and monotony. That same rose-covered cottage was damp, insanitary and indecently overcrowded. See the Lady Bountiful of the village!—my Aunt Eleanor was one. How good and kind and generous she was, but also how beneficent and, without intention, how patronizing! moving graciously down the street with her soup and blankets and insistence on the sanctity of her command! The public-house was the only refuge, the village wall the idle meeting-place, and rheumatics, paralysis, imbecility the end of all things.

Then the gates were opened: Lloyd George opened them, the motor-car opened them, the War opened them. Keir Hardie knocked them down with *his* little hatchet. John Burns with *his*, the Education Act gave them a well-planted kick.

Suddenly the English people were liberated

Let me tell a little story This same Aunt Eleanor of mine cared for everyone in her village, knew them all by name, their histories, their failings (especially their failings), their obstinacies, their many, many illnesses She was on the whole satisfied with them as God might be with his pet tribe of Indians, she was immensely proud of them, she declared there was no village in all England as fine as hers But there was one family of whom she was never weary of complaining I remember them well They were called Gubbings Mr Gubbings was some sort of a farm-labourer He and Mrs Gubbings between them had provided the world with at least twelve little Gubbings Perhaps there were more They all lived together in one of those same rose-covered cottages The children went (or did not go) to the village school. Some of the Gubbings young men were loafers and at least two of the Gubbings young women were no better than they should be They were the rebels of the village. If there was trouble, the Gubbings were responsible Everyone worked at them—the clergyman, the clergyman's wife, the little old doctor, and my Aunt Eleanor Aunt Eleanor was very good

to them, always giving them things, always urging them to church, always caring for them when they were ill. And yet they hated her. They showed her no gratitude. They accepted her gifts as a very small part of their natural due, they laughed at her behind her back. I cannot possibly compute the amount of unhappiness they gave Aunt Eleanor. They were her natural cross. She *could not* understand what God was doing to allow them such licence. She shook her head over them morning and evening.

There came an afternoon, a terrible afternoon; it hastened, I am sure, Aunt Eleanor's lamented death. A Gubbings child was ill and my Aunt visited the cottage with soups and jellies. I suppose that Mrs. Gubbings was at the very end of her human endurance, for after accepting the soups and jellies, quite suddenly she took them and threw them at my Aunt. She then took the clock from the mantelpiece, the two china dogs, the vase that was "A Present from Brighton," and threw them too. The family danced in a kind of ecstasy about her. And she cried again and again something like this: "Get out of 'ere! Get out of 'ere with your haughty ways and your condescending airs! We've no room for you and no room

for nothing. No room, no room, no room!" So then the battle is merrily joined

Coming down the road into Rafiel where twenty years ago, in perfect stillness, the trees threw their shade and on the rising fields the cows lazily flapped their tails, now, like a flea, I must hop for my life to escape two cars and three motor-bicycles. I count four garages, two petrol-stations, and one large public urinal. And there I meet stout rubicund Walter of the post-office. In old days, when I came down from London, Walter would meet me at Drymouth or even as far as Polchester in an old racketty motor-car, the first of all the motor-cars, and, together, singing our songs, we would happily bump homewards!

To-day Walter is rich. One of the biggest garages is his and his cousin runs three 'buses a day to Drymouth and back. And as to the post-office . . . !

"Do you remember old Bessie Trew? When someone came in for a stamp Bessie would be all in a tremor, nodding her old head, winking and saying "What is it you're wantin'? A stamp? Deary me! Deary me!"

"This week," Walter continued trium-



phantly, "I ordered one hundred and sixty pounds worth of stamps from London!"

In Walter's support—must I not in all honesty confess it?—on a fine Sunday both in Rafiel and by Derwentwater what a gay scene is to be beheld! Ten years ago to bathe on a Sunday in Rafiel was Godless. Do I not remember watching, as I read my books on the cliff side, old Ezekiel Mark approach a pair of careless bathers who, their shirts flapping about their bare knees, were forced to listen to a quarter-of-an-hour's lecture on their Godlessness! And this morning even as the bell is ringing for morning service four young ladies have but just emerged from their lodging, brilliant in red and yellow pyjamas, smoking cigarettes, and carrying a portable radio-set!

"The Godlessness! The Godlessness!" cries old Dick Raskell down on the Quay even as, at the other end of the question, Mrs. Gubbings years ago cried out for "Room!" To old Dick everything is Godless to-day, but most of all the Cinema. Here in Rafiel the Cinema comes once a week from Drymouth; soon it will be twice a week and, after that, "The Talkers" as they are called here, will be permanently enthroned. Two things are notice-

able about the "Talkers" Their Godlessness for one and the complete indifference to that same Godlessness on the part of that same youthful audience For, in the space of a night, the new generation in England has eaten, completely and finally, of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil They know all, far far more than any Cinema can teach or show them All the old restraints are gone—no hope of Heaven, no fear of Hell, no terror of Parents, no nightmare of Poverty There is Modern Science (scraps of it are all they need), there is the Modern Parent (complacent, cowardly, bewildered), there is the Dole In Rastiel at this moment there are a number of young ladies, most elegantly attired and with perfect manners, who serve languidly in the tea-shops during the summer and eagerly relapse upon the Dole as soon as the winter months are come

England is covered then, as though by a golden mist, with this moving, shouting, laughing devil-may-care population

Wells said somewhere the other day that in Europe and America to-day more people on an average are in happy and comfortable circumstances than ever before in the world's history.

So, with their laughter and singing, they scatter their orange-peel, make love as they hurtle through the air on their motor-bicycles, believe in nothing but their own fun and freedom, give every shady lane a petrol-pump, work only when they must, practise the rites of birth-control as often before the Ceremony as after it, laugh at cranks and prophets and scare-mongers and detest with all their hearts the tranced silence that comes with half-an-hour's aloneness.

Meanwhile in England there survive an amazing number of quiet places. On Yorkshire Moors, on Cotswold Hills, up Cumberland valleys, in Wiltshire hamlets and Northumberland beaches the noise and tumult have died away. No one stops anywhere any more. It is the "Bed and Breakfast" notices that attract. Slowly, slowly (often among the youngest generation of all) a passion for silence is beginning to be born. Old Ezekiel Mark and Dick Raskell who these last thirty years have leant over the sea-wall and spat into the water and uttered not a word, are being joined by a surprising number of grave-faced contemplative boys and girls. Their fathers and mothers had the licence: themselves they are beginning to work out a new

Code God is coming back into favour again. He is returning as He always returns. But in a new disguise. He is scientific now, hygienic, sanitary, bare-limbed and crowned with clear-sighted courage. The petrol pumps are losing some of their flagrant yellow and are acquiring a coat of silver-grey. As I walk up to Seathwaite and on to Sty Head a great silence envelopes me, the clouds hang heavy over Glaramara and a dim, singing wind sighs round the flanks of Gable. Down the Pass comes a band of "hikers," bare-kneed, bare-necked, with staves and packs like the Pilgrims of old. They walk silently, sniffing the brilliant air, watching the stream leap the boulders at their feet. They have the look of men discovering a new world. Twenty years ago they would have crowded the town-street, loafing, cat-calling, wondering when the "Public" would be ready for them. Then they knew nothing and cared nothing. Now they think they know everything but yet are eager to know more. They swing down the path, are gone, and the valley is alone again.

Who will prophesy? We are all so fond of taking some accidental sign of the moment and transforming it, because of our human love of crisis, into some devastating finality.

Nothing is final, nothing altogether good nor, thank heaven, altogether bad. England is not destroyed; the loveliness is not consumed—and we are moving into a new world of surpassing wonder.

## TWO-AND-TWENTY SWALLOWS

By Sir W Beach Thomas, K B E

IF there were dreams to sell " many of us " when the crier rang his bell " would follow Beddoes and buy a cottage Such a cottage as he wished lies off the road in the Home Counties, and though not quite " lone and still," is still enough to be much beloved by many birds Especially is the love nursed of this home within the memory of a particular pair of swallows or their progeny Year after year they are awaited, and year after year they come pat to the appointment, if we may allow a margin of two or three days on a 3,000-mile flight They must be conceded the qualifications " D V and W P," but, whatever the weather, *Deus vult*, and the swallows begin building before April is out, and usually in the very same spot Most often they refit the last year's nest

This year the record has been of quite peculiar interest, and one of the more baffling queries in the life of migrant birds will be illus-

trated in the coming weeks, for the eggs of the fourth successive brood are on the point of being hatched. That any pair of birds should produce three broods within a season is a marvel. That a migrant bird, which comes when spring is well on the way, and must feed the last youngsters till they are strong enough to fly 3,000 miles, should have the courage and determination to produce four; is a miracle that no books recognize. Nevertheless and notwithstanding, this is not the first record of such energy. Two years ago four broods were successfully reared in the same place, perhaps by the same pair. Their career and, if one may say so, their mentality are worth attention and deserve a record.

The swallows are expected each year on Primrose Day, April 19. The cottager always spring-cleans the nest a few days before they are expected. This year she went to prepare on April 16, but found, to her distress, that a jenny-wren had occupied and adapted the nest. In affection for the swallows and for the sake of abstract justice, she hardened her heart against the interloper, and turned out the dome of leaf and moss. By April 19 the wren had restored the home again; and again was evicted. Even this did not quell the little bird's

persistence, she built a third time, and as there was still no sign of the swallows, she was not only allowed to remain, but help was extended in the rearrangement of the material. It was better to have some bird than none in the nest, but complications arose. On April 29 the belated swallows arrived, and gave every sign of mental disturbance when they visited the old home and found it occupied, for the wren had now finished her nest and laid several eggs. As a compromise the cottager, by way of suggestion, made up some mud pies in the other corner of the loose box, but the swallows would have none of it, and after a week of petulant anger they themselves threw some of the wren's eggs on the floor and drove out the mother.

This left the landlord, as the cottager calls herself, no alternative. She climbed the steps, went through the spring cleaning once more (in spite of pity for the wren) and by way of making a proper job of it, took up some soft mud and repaired the side of the nest "to save time." The swallows came to watch her, and even perched near by during the reparations. As soon as ever they were finished, the hen took possession and laid a full clutch of eggs. The time thus saved in nest-building



(and in a dry spring it may be quite a long process) enabled the pair to equal their previous performance. Three broods have so far been raised in the quickest possible succession. A fourth clutch of five eggs was completed on or about September 4. Presumably these will be hatched and four families of young safely launched in spite of the abnormally late arrival. The fourth clutch was completed as near as may be in three months, for the pair did not go into residence till May 6. Very careful note has been taken of the dates and other facts, and will be taken till the summer story is completed and the score or so of swallows born in the old nest take their mysterious way over the Channel and along the coast of Portugal to some winter home far south in the West of Africa.

Is it at all probable that this fourth brood, should it be safely hatched, will be strong enough to fly the 3,000 miles before the end of autumn? Swallows, I think, grow their feathers more quickly than most birds, perhaps than any bird. Above any animal, perhaps, of any kingdom, the tribe is quick and vivid; is of the air airy. In the tissue of their bones are sacs for holding the air to which they belong, for buoying them in its friendly sub-

stance, for keeping them definitely, and in some more mystic way than we know, "in touch" with the movements of the moisture, the temperature, and the pressures of the air. Maybe, also, some directional instinct is literally "felt in the bones." In movement and in so-called mind the swallows are quick and vivid, but the full power of the race can hardly come into possession of these young, soon to be born, until October is in mid-course. Well, it is a lovely month, and those who have watched this philo-progenitive put through a summer that does not deserve the name will nurse a special hope that October may make good on the birds' behalf the worst defects of July.

## BIRDS WHICH ANNOY ME

*By Bassett Digby*

**B**IRDS have always enjoyed what is known in the trade as a good press. Curiously few animadversions against any of them appear even in journals which permit, nay, even encourage, the contributor to make the most bitter aspersions on enemies of man in the animal, reptile, batrachian, piscine, and conchological world.

What manner of insensitive scatterwits are those people who extol the song of the blackbird, for instance? Surely rank sentimentalists. I am now trying to write a book in an orchard infested by a blackbird. He begins his maddeningly shrill song at the very first phase of dawn (waking me up then for half an hour) and gives seven or eight long recitals a day. A thrush is not nearly so bad. He just says: "Toodle-too, toodle-too, toodle-too!" or "E acute, E acute, E acute" about a dozen times with the perfunctoriness of a town crier in a hurry to get round with the message and be

done with it. Then he keeps quiet. The blackbird, on the other hand, is in no hurry. No two bits of his song are alike. He sings a twisty-corkscrewy passage, up and down, cadenced like Chinese dialect, for from five to fifteen seconds, and waits attentively to hear a distant rival's reply. Then, with unflinching equanimity, he replies. It is like listening to a man having a long, pause-strewn dialogue at a telephone or a long, calm, but searching examination of a witness by a K C in a heavy commercial case—if they whistled in a highly intricate manner. The brute hasn't a pen-n'orth of music in his soul. It may well be that blackbirds are, in very sooth, reincarnated leaders of the Bar.

Again, concentrating on imaginative work with starlings about one is very bad for the temper. The starling is a low comedian vocally. He does extraordinary things with that voice of his. He makes flapping noises, like rapidly releasing the bent-up corners of a packet of envelopes. He hiccups. He gets you listening to a plaintive, long, rambling, low-pitched whistle, very pathetic stuff—then gives a brace of loud hiccups and proceeds with a realistic imitation of fast typewriting. He clucks and scolds, says "Yow!" and chases

the cat round the orchard, cursing her volubly for so obviously hanging about under the nest where the fledglings are apt to fall.

Cuckoos, too, are accursed fowl if they dwell within a few hundred yards of you. They are even more infuriating than blackbirds, because of the monotony of their silly call. I once lived in a cottage beset by cuckoos, which sometimes sat on branches quite close by and cuckooed sixty or eighty times right off the bat, unless discouraged with a clod of turf. The record-breaker managed a run of one hundred and thirty-one "cuck-oo's" (just after four in the morning).

Rooks and crows, too, are addicted to making loud and idiotic noises very early in the morning within a short distance of one's rural bedroom. It can't be called song. It is just a raucous way of snatching an hour or two of the night's rest of human beings in the vicinity.

The noisy outbreaks of ducks are infrequent and last only a few seconds, but they are a great nuisance, for the temptation to put down one's pen and go off to see what is happening on the river is strong. Like the denizens of Mediterranean alleys, ducks are prone to sudden exciting rows and riots, alarums and excursions. Things happen to their young—

rats go for them and pike get them by the leg

Domesticated fowl in general, and cocks in particular, are the worst abomination and the most diabolical. I am always buoyed up by the realization that I am a noble soul who can, but will not, buy a quiet and effective airgun any fine day and kill the starlings, the blackbirds, and the cuckoos which bother me. But raiding neighbours' fowl runs is too much for me. The brutes have to be endured, be the agony what it may

## HUNCHBACKED FLEAS

*Anonymous*

ELECTRICITY seems without question to be a very powerful thing, and its volts are particularly strong when they co-operate and all work together. One hundred thousand of them, acting in unison, under skilled human direction, have just achieved another of those marked successes with which the name of electricity has come to be associated. They have in short produced, if not quite a new type of flea, at any rate a startling modification of the ordinary pattern. The electricity at Syracuse University has proved that, if enough trouble is taken and a sufficiently powerful X-ray machine is used, fleas with humped backs can be produced. "The backs of the creatures," says science, in quiet and bloodless but deeply satisfied tones, "become extremely convex." Scientists often find it very trying to be modest because the world is puzzled and unappreciative and wants to know what good the new results

are going to do. But there is no such difficulty here, where the benefits leap to the eye at once and are plain to all intelligences.

Although we live in a humane age, when animals in particular get ready sympathy for their troubles, yet there are limits, and, though it is of course a misfortune to be extremely convex, the misfortunes of fleas spell the comfort of men. Humpback fleas cannot jump and leap and play hide and seek, and, being less active, may reasonably be expected to want less food. It is quite true, of course, as the pessimists will hasten to point out, that physical deformities tend to sour the temper and induce misanthropy, so that, though the new kind of flea may be less efficient, there will be an added malignancy in what is still achieved. But the irritation these small creatures cause mankind and its canine friends comes much less from anything that even the blackest-hearted of them knows how to bring off than from the sense of frustration and defeat which human clumsiness in reprisal produces. They may be evilly disposed as well as just egoistic or unseasonably playful, and we shall not mind provided they are also slow and incompetent and easily settled. It should also be added, if



there is any question of the gratitude due to Syracuse, New York, that the X-rays render the fleas sterile and that drastic depopulation is only a question of time and of the development of hydro-electric power, principally by deepening the St. Lawrence waterway and harnessing the power of the Great Lakes. The day is probably not far distant when the present level of skill shown by performing fleas will look to our descendants but the very crudest of crude beginnings. The repertoire of tricks has been limited by anatomical considerations which can now be treated as in no way insuperable, and to the drawing of carriages and posturing in tableaux can be added other acts, involving balancing and the simpler sort of acrobatic formations, for which a different shape will be invaluable. Provided the flea is caught young enough by the X-ray and electrical treatments, there is probably no limit to the changes in the direction of greater utility and greater æsthetic appeal that we may hope to see.

Nor will it end with fleas. Scientists may begin with small things but they have larger game in view, and rare is the human being who could not do with a little modification. Already there is eagerness, if the reports from

New York mean anything, which say that "elephant telephoning" has become the rage. Elephant telephony can be played with human noses and an automatic telephone. Following the rumour that a resourceful man, who had been bound by burglars, had succeeded in dialling for the police with his nose, there has been eagerness among New Yorkers to acquire this useful accomplishment and to be better equipped for emergencies. At once a new standard of merit in adjudging noses has come into existence, and the long bird-like beak which has hitherto suggested a prying nature has acquired a new value. No doubt the art can be learnt with almost any kind of nose, given patience, and it will repay busy people whose hands are already busy on the typewriter. It is the sort of accomplishment, pleasant in normal times and invaluable in crises, for which the Boy Scout and Girl Guide organizations might fittingly award a badge. The danger to-day is that we shall leave off trying, and wait for science either to abolish the necessity for dialling at all or to treat us young with a view to giving us a face of more practical value and a nose "as sharp as a pen". The fleas keep fit because they do not know what else men of science may have up their

sleeves, but men, who can read what is going on in the world, are only too easily tempted to sit back indolently and wait for science to make them anew.

## CHARACTER OF THE DRAGON

*By Rose Macaulay*

I NEED scarcely point out that anything like an adequate examination of the character of this highly temperamental creature would take far more than a short paper, in fact, a whole library. As time does not at the moment permit that I should write a whole library (though if spared, I hope to do so hereafter), I cannot here do more than touch very slightly on draconian dispositions. I shall therefore concentrate on the dragon's better nature, omitting those unfavourable anecdotes and comments which have been, down the ages, so freely made on him, and which are, to all who love dragons, painful reading.

For it is idle to pretend that dragons have been popular animals. Too often they have been regarded merely as objects for hostile assault, as, in fact, big game. No doubt there have been reasons for this, still, to read what has been said of dragons by Jewish, pagan,

and Christian writers, by the priggish Physiologus, the plagiaristic mediaeval Bestiarists, and practically all poets (look, for instance, at the part he plays in "Beowulf," and in the "Faerie Queene") makes one feel, with the kindly Edward Topsel, that the dragon has been under-appreciated. Probably his personal appearance has done him no good. No creature could be as bad as the dragon looks. He is too often disliked on sight; as he was by the earl Guy of Warwick, who intervened, without inquiry as to the rights of the matter, in a duel between a dragon and a lion, and slew the dragon; which worked out none too well for the earl, for the grateful lion attached himself to his preserver for life, and must have been a considerable embarrassment. Had Guy instead slain the lion, the dragon might have proved as faithful a nuisance, for dragons have, as Topsel points out, very faithful natures, and, when the relationship between them and humanity has been other than that of slayer and slain (whichever way round), they have proved loyal friends.

The dragon's fidelity as guardian has always been recognized, and he has ever been appointed to watch over objects of value, such as treasure, golden fleeces, golden apples, virgins,

and the like (He has been peculiarly suited to these custodies, since he has an immense respect for virgins, and does not, so Aristotle informs us, eat apples, finding they disagree with him) This faithful guardianship is the more creditable because the dragon apparently dislikes his task In a Roman fable (Englished by Sir Roger L'Estrange) he mentions to a fox that he hates guarding treasure underground " 'Tis a Misery," he says, " that I am doom'd to, and there's no avoiding it." So faithful is he that Pallas Athene often chose him as companion *Cur Diva comes hoc animal?* a poet not unnaturally inquires, and makes answer *Custodia rerum huic data est*, and particularly that of unmarried females (If I cannot put a name to this poet, it is the fault of my own handwriting, which has been transcribing, through a long life, such dragon lore as I came on, but which cannot, unfortunately, always be read)

But apart from his duties as custodian, the dragon has continually proved his love and piety, when he has turned his (it must be admitted) somewhat capricious fancy towards some human being. Ælianus has a pretty tale of a Thessalian dragon, who took a liking to a young neat-herd in Ossa, and used to visit

him, licking his hands and face, and bringing him the spoils of the chase. Pliny quotes Democritus on the case of young Thoas in Arcadia, who kept a little dragon whelp as a child, but, as it grew larger, his friends, becoming alarmed, took it away into the mountains and left it there. Years later, Thoas, now become a man, was set on by thieves in these same mountains, and cried for help, and his one-time pet, knowing the young master's voice, hurried to his assistance and slew his foes. There are other similar stories of rescue by dragon, which show that one might have worse pets. The Emperor Tiberius kept one, which was very useful in chastising his enemies and the servants. They have also frequently been used for traction. The goddess Ceres, for instance, had (for all I know, still has) a very fine pair of winged ones, who drew the chariot in which she skimmed the ocean, flew to heaven, etc., and which she lent to Triptolemus for his world wheat-distribution. Medea also had a dragon-car, in which she was used to make her get-aways after her achieved and attempted murders.

That the dragon is a tameable creature we have much evidence. Alexander and his army observed one in a cave, being fed by women

and children, though it apparently disliked the army, for "the lighting of its eyes and its terrible hissing made a strong impression on the Macedonians," says Ælianus. But children used to ride on the smaller Macedonian dragons, and take them to bed like Teddy-bears. And there was (says Athanasius Kircher) a Lucerne man fell into a dragon's lair and lived on the friendliest terms with the inhabitants for six months. Even George Meredith believes, hopefully, that we can "make of him who was all maw, such a servant as none saw." We should believe the best of him. Bartholomew Anglicus and Topsel both explain how some of his more alarming habits (such as chasing ships at sea, and leaping on to elephants and sucking their blood) arise mainly, like his innocent partiality for lettuce, from the fact that he is always too hot. Though, as to the elephant, one must own that there is here no little mutual antipathy, as between the dragon and the panther, of whom Physiologus tells us that he is "a friend bountiful in kindness to all but the dragon," which naturally the dragon resents.

Faithful custodian, loyal friend, loving pet, he is also a lover of chastity, almost, indeed, a



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prude. So particular is he about virgins (says  
Ælianus) that he will refuse even his favourite  
foods from the hands of a lady whom he per-  
ceives (and he always knows) to be outside this  
category. This was found a very useful "acid  
test" (as our politicians love to say). At times  
he almost overdoes prudery, as in the case of  
one mentioned by Mandeville, who refused the  
kiss of strange knights, even though this was  
the only method of being turned back again  
into a lady. And it was a dragon who parted  
Telephus from his mother before the affair  
had gone too far (though, as to that, quite far  
enough). Again and again he has stood up  
for propriety, and has, indeed, become an  
emblem of this quality, so that ladies are some-  
times called, like Thackeray's Lady Thrum,  
"a dragon of virtue and propriety." So nice  
are some dragons that they will not be observed  
eating, and watchers have before now been  
smitten with madness for peering at them.  
Can these delicate prudes indeed be of the  
same species as Beowulf's Grendel, and Spen-  
ser's loathly worm? Dragons are, indeed, as  
various in temper as humanity.

And this must suffice of the dragon for the  
moment, but for a note on *How to capture  
dragons (if so desired)*: *Incant soothing verses*

*to them, and hang brightly coloured cloths  
before their eyes, which lulls them to sleep  
Then bridle them When safely caged, give  
them eggs, which they will break with their  
tails and eat*

## CLUMPS

By Sir Maurice Sheldon Amos, K.B.E.

AS this monograph relates to a new and abstruse branch of the higher dialectics, I ought, I suppose, to have submitted it to the editor of *Mind*. But as it is obviously desirable that my speculations should reach as many as possible of the wide public which plays Clumps, I ventured to tax the hospitality of *The London Mercury*.

As far as I can discover, there is practically no Clumps literature. Whole libraries have been written on chess and on bridge, but I feel certain—though this I confess I have not verified—that the catalogue of the British Museum contains no separate title for "Clumps." This, considering the many recondite problems in logic and metaphysics presented by the game, is certainly curious. The explanation is perhaps to be found in the circumstance that the larger possibilities of the noble sport are seldom explored save by small groups of specialists, who, having constructed,

after years of experience and study, the necessary philosophic scaffolding, keep their mysteries, as did the priests of ancient Egypt, to themselves. The time has come, however, in the opinion of the present writer, to break down these esoteric barriers, and to invoke the assistance of the educated public in laying down the general principles, at any rate, which underlie the most arduous of our parlour games.

Everyone knows how to play Clumps. One person goes out, and thinks of something—the Panama Canal, or Uncle James's pocket-handkerchief. When he comes back, the general company ask him whether it's animal, vegetable or mineral. If there are enough people, you can play sides and see who gets the answer quickest. On the other hand, the game can be perfectly well played with only two persons, the Proponent and the Rogator, and this is perhaps the best number for the practice of the higher flights. When mind is pitted against mind in tense combat, it is irritating for the Rogator, hot on the trail of the elusive product of his adversary's agile fancy, to be interrupted by the inept babblings of an inexperienced colleague. For it is only in the nursery that the *Invenienda* (a technical term)

are confined to such simple objects as the Kohinoor, Signor Mussolini's right hand little finger-nail, or the toothbrush of the oldest French naval officer on the active list whose name begins with an F. When Clumps is (or are) played by practised adults, *e.g.* at the Universities, at the Athenæum Club, or at meetings of the Royal Society, the permitted range of Exquirenda (another technical term) extends to all definable objects of thought, real or imaginary: Ethel Newcome's youngest grandchild, the Snark's birthday, the odds at eight in the morning of June 18th, 1815, that Napoleon would win the battle of Waterloo, the smallest number which can be represented in two ways as the sum of seven cubes, or the ultimate fate of the Albert Memorial. Now it is obvious that you can't deal with this sort of thing by "animal, vegetable, or mineral." Perhaps the first question, or pair of alternative questions, to put is "Real?" or "Imaginary?" Here, as elsewhere, the answer may be "I don't know." The Proponent is not obliged to know everything about his subject, provided he knows enough for it to be guessed. He is not obliged to know whether the shirt worn by the Black Prince at the battle of Crécy is a real or an imaginary object; or

whether the least prime number containing all the nine digits is a figment of his fancy. But here a difficulty arises. What do we mean by "imaginary"? The Snark's birthday, Prince Bulbo's other clothes, Man Friday's footprint, are easy cases. But what about the Channel Tunnel? For all we know, there may be one some day. Is the possible tunnel to be regarded as a definitely imaginary entity, or ought we to say that we don't know? I venture to think that here is a case for a convention, and that the rule should be that where the *inveniendum* is a present or past possibility, as to which we don't know whether or no it exists or has existed, the answer to the question "Real?" should be "I don't know," while if it is a future possibility the answers should be "Real? No," "Imaginary? Yes." In other words where the uncertainty as to the existence of the thing to be guessed arises entirely from our ignorance of the future, the *inveniendum* should be treated as imaginary. "Sea serpent" is a case for a nescient answer: it will commonly be agreed that we don't know whether the past, present, or future of the existent world contains this phenomenon.

If we adopt the convention that ignorance confined to the future requires an affirmative

answer to the question "imaginary," Rogator, on receiving this reply, will be well advised to administer the alternatives "future possibility?" or "purely imaginary?"

Considerable difficulties arise in the handling of the very necessary alternative "abstract or concrete." If you want to have any chance of tracking down such entities as "the Limerick," "the quality of mercy," or "Relativity," you must obviously get away from the world of tangible things as soon as possible. But what exactly do you mean by "abstract"? What about "all the houses in London numbered 15," "the next Parliament," "the temperature at the centre of Sirius," "the letter X"? We obviously want to keep as near as possible to the metaphysics of the plain man, and to make, if we can, the same distinctions as he would make. But the most rugged simplicity of mind risks its virgin bloom in the atmosphere of the "Clumps" room, and most clubs have found it necessary to adopt a definite convention as to the meaning of "abstract." The philosophy of uncontaminated common sense is something of this kind: Every entity which is a "Thing" is concrete. Every entity which is not a "Thing" is abstract. Things comprise, in the first place, all individual

material objects, animate and inanimate, animal, vegetable, and mineral. Parts of things, such as arms and legs, are themselves things, provided they are material parts. An attribute of a thing, such as its size or its weight, is not a thing. A group of things is a thing, if the parts or members are sufficiently closely connected, otherwise not. A single copy of the *Times* is a thing, but not a number of the *Times*, or a file of the *Times*. The Rifle Brigade or the British nation are not things.

I don't for a moment attempt to defend these assertions, our untutored friend would probably collapse in cross-examination. What would he say, for example, if asked whether the mind of Napoleon was a thing? He would probably reply that it was a mental thing. "Come, come," we should protest, "you have told us that whatever is not a thing is an abstraction, for the purpose of answering the question 'abstract or concrete?', subdivisions of things, as into material or mental, are irrelevant." "Was Napoleon's mind an abstraction?" He will doubtless throw himself on our mercy, and tell us to have it as we please, as long as we let him know the rule. Probably the best convention, for English clubs at any rate, is that which confines "things" to



individual material things, and treats all other entities as abstractions. Things, by the way, may of course be imaginary—John Silver's wooden leg is a thing, all right, for the distinction between reality and fancy is irrelevant to that between concrete and abstract. The practised Rogator will not find very great difficulty in following up the concrete line. Does it exist? Yes. Mineral? Yes. A natural object? Yes. Living? No. In any particular country? Yes. In Greece? No. In Italy? Yes. A mountain? No. A river? Yes. The Tiber? No. The Rubicon? Yes. Is that all? No. The Rubicon at the moment that Julius Cæsar crossed it? Yes. General applause. This of course is smart work, but nothing exceptional; and Rogator was helped rather than hindered, by the erroneous reply that the ens, quiddity, or exquirendum still exists. But the world of the abstract is much more difficult to tackle, particularly when we give it the very wide range conceded by the English convention. And here perhaps I ought to mention a convention of fundamental importance, equally applicable to the concrete and to the abstract, and I believe, universally accepted, at any rate in Europe, namely, that the *inveniendum* must be *the* something; it cannot be *a* something.

"A pang of remorse," "a button," "a number" are illegitimate. The actual form of the definition does not matter. "The bark of a dog," "the twinkle of a star" are disallowed, but "groans of despair" and "pills" are admissible, since they mean classes—the class of all pills, the class of all groans of despair. A difficult problem is raised by the logically impossible. "The class of all numbers which are both odd and even." Is this admissible? I believe that experts hold that it is, a class which can have no member is the "null-class," familiar to logicians, and, in competent hands, perfectly guessable. A more difficult case is "the class of all classes", but here I am getting out of my depth. The class of all classes contains itself, a circumstance said to be repugnant to philosophers. If the case should arise in practice, it should if possible be carried to the Lords, where we now fortunately have three Scottish judges.

It is tempting to suggest that the rules of the amateur game should prohibit all "classes." But this would have consequences surprising to the plainest of men, and the prettiest of misses. It would, for instance, exclude "number one," which, as we know, on the most exalted authority, is "a class of

similar classes": it would exclude such familiar topics of meditation as "Cambridge Blues," "the pangs of despised love," "pickled peaches," and "the conic sections." In fact it would reduce the whole thing to a puerile level. Besides, there is another great difficulty about any such rule: who knows what is meant by a class? Classes border on two other types of entity, from both of which it is difficult, at any rate for the present writer, to distinguish them—groups or collections, and a certain kind of general ideas. Consider "the Black Watch," "Tea," "the right-angled triangle," "Nettlefold's screws," "Father's boots," "the people in this room," "the letters of the alphabet." If attention is directed to the component members of the collection, and particularly if they are regarded as easily countable, the class slides over into the group, as in the cases of the last three examples. It would be quaint to speak of Father's boots as a class. If, on the other hand, attention and emphasis point to the opposite pole, to the governing ideas, and the component individuals are in the background, the class vanishes into the defining idea. "Tea," "revenge," "identity" may be classes, but they certainly don't sound like it.

It is often desirable to pursue two lines of inquiry alternatively, one aiming at the direct determination of the nature of "It," the other a flank attack, seeking as it were for the home in which "It" lives, the pit from which it is dug. To learn that the quarry is a something in or connected with a story will carry us a long way towards discovering the grandmother of Robert Bruce's spider, or the Little Round Button on Top, or the slipper which Cinderella didn't lose. To know that "It" is defined by its place in a series will be a substantial help in tracking the last letter in the Bible, the first bullet fired in the Peninsular War, or the largest strawberry ever made into jam.

But some of our finest and most successful players regard the difficulties of the systematic interrogatory as so great, that they place almost their whole reliance upon psycho-analysis. I can best illustrate this method by giving a few of the final moves from a very brilliant bit of play of which I was the fortunate spectator only a few weeks ago. The protagonists were an eminent member of the Chancery Bar (Rogator) and, playing Proponent, a scholar, whose voluminous contributions to learning have been chiefly concerned with comparative

mythology. When I took my seat at the ring-side it had already been ascertained that "It" was a generic idea, but not a class, that it was perpetually recurrent, and that it was connected with a mythological place. Q. Valhalla? A. No. Q. The Lost Atlantis? A. Certainly not. Q. Hades? A. Yes. Q. Associated with the inhabitants? A. Yes. Q. Their favourite diversion? A. Oh no. Q. Their principal occupation? A. Alas! Yes. Q. Playing Clumps? . . . . The reply was drowned in a burst of cheers.

## EARLY POETRY FOR CHILDREN

*Anonymous*

IT is not until the latter half of the seventeenth century that we find writers definitely turning their attention to books for children. Before that time there were lesson-books (including the quaint and curious horn-books), some copies of which are still extant, and books on manners and behaviour. We may also take it that children who were eager and anxious to read, read, as they still do, all the books on which they could lay their hands. Indeed, as early as 1557 we find a writer uttering a solemn warning against this danger. "Keep them," he says, "from reading of feigned fables, vain fantasies and wanton stories and songs of love, which bring much mischief to youth."

The first printed books were in any case rare and precious, available only to the monk, the scholar, the cultured rich. Later on they were published under patronage and reached a restricted public only, but presently, as print-

ing and publishing became easier, volumes definitely intended for children began to appear, though for a long time they were of a curiously uniform type. It would seem as if the child were given but little consideration or study on the psychological side. Indeed, quite apart from this matter of writing *for* children, very little was written *about* them. References to the young are not frequent in early writings, and with a few notable and interesting exceptions we find that such references treat of the child in a very general and rather conventional way. It cries, is an unwilling scholar, is the hope of its father, or, alas! very frequently dies young and is suitably lamented. Of its special and individual characteristics there is but scant mention. Children in those days were accounted mature much earlier than now; but, although when quite young they were doubtlessly interesting to their fathers and mothers, they seem generally to have been regarded rather as potential adults than as definite entities. Their very clothes were but miniature replicas of those worn by their elders. One feels, indeed, that the manner in which they are depicted on the old tombs is entirely expressive of the attitude in those days towards children up to the age

of twelve or thereabouts. They are differentiated only according to size and sex—so many girls, so many boys. Otherwise they are exactly alike. And even when writers did begin to consider children they looked upon the child mind as so much ductile and passive material waiting to receive the impression set upon it by the omniscient adult. The point of view of the child itself, its special predilections and peculiarities, hardly came into the question at all.

Lullabies and nursery rhymes existed earlier and have a history of their own. Many of the latter were never intended for children, being popular jingles often handed down by oral tradition and frequently treating of topical subjects, such as uprisings and rebellions and the fortunate or unfortunate enterprises of kings and statesmen. One imagines that those which survived did so on account of some specially taking excellence of phrase or rhythm—some quaintness of verbal presentation.

Rings on her fingers and bells on her toes,  
She shall have music wherever she goes.

That is the sort of couplet which by reason of its melodious quality may well outlast more sophisticated felicities. In some instances these

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rhymes have so little to recommend them that it is hard to detect any good reason for their survival. But the verses in the first volumes published for the use of children are not at all in the nursery rhyme manner. They are almost invariably didactic, exhortatory, even minatory; and this attitude on the part of their writers continued well into the nineteenth century. Bunyan, in his *Book for Boys and Girls*, published in 1686 and later reprinted under the title *Divine Emblems*, has the following lines in his preface:

I do't to show them how each fingle-fangle  
On which they doting are, their souls entangle.  
As with a web, a trap, a gin, a snare,  
And will destroy them, have they not a care.

The book itself contains a curious series of poems dealing mainly with the habits of animals, most of them followed by a "comparison" or moral application. One of the shorter poems runs as follows:

\* THE FROG.

The Frog by Nature is both damp and cold,  
Her mouth is large, her belly much will hold,  
She sits somewhat ascending, loves to be  
Croaking in Gardens, tho' unpleasantly.

## Comparison

The Hypocrite is like unto this Frog  
As like as is the Puppy to the Dog  
He is of Nature cold, his Mouth is wide  
To prate, and at true Goodness to deride  
He mounts his Head, as if he was above  
The World, when yet 'tis that which has his  
love

Yet the poems contain some attractive lines  
Thus, of the snail,

She goes but softly, but she goeth sure,  
and of a butterfly,

All her all is lighter than a feather

Some of them have more than a touch of humour. The "Fatted Swine," for example, is thus apostrophized in another poem:

But Hogg, why look'st so big? Why dost so  
  flounce,  
So snort and sling away, dost now renounce  
Subjection to thy Lord, 'cause he hath fed thee?  
Thou art but yet a Hogg, of such he bred thee  
Lay by thy snorting, do not look so big,  
What was thy Predecessor but a Pig

In another line the creature is delightfully addressed as a "grunthing" The "Meditation upon an Egg" begins with the following couplet:

The Egg's no chick by falling from the Hen  
Nor Man a Christian till he's born again.

Possibly the children for whom these verses were written took them more lightly than the author intended, as is the happy habit of their kind. Another early book, *The Child's Week's Work*, by one Ronksley (published in 1712), is an attractive little volume. The first "Week" consists of short poems in words of one syllable. Friday's "Forenoon Lesson" begins thus:

The Horse does Prance  
(Nay, some can Dance).  
Leap, Jump, Pace, Trot and Run.  
He Kicks and Rears,  
The Earth he tears,  
He fears not Sword or Gun.

The "Father's Blessing," of about the same period, has the following neat little couplet in the preface:

Those little children that are wise  
Do fear the Lord and tell no lies.

The book itself begins with very solemn rhymed exhortations on the subject of prayer, followed, as a concession to youthful frivolity, by two pages of extremely artless riddles in rhyme.

Q What call you that the cook and the  
good wife  
Can't make a meal without ?  
A It is a knife

Most children have such a passion for riddles of any description that it is not surprising to find these two pages of this little book bearing considerably more signs of wear than the earlier and more serious part of the volume

In 1715 we get Dr Watts's book of *Divine and Moral Songs*, written with an intense fervour of conviction which at times flames into a really moving beauty "I sing the almighty power of God" is a lovely thing, but there are in the collection many other hymns so fiercely minatory that they must surely have made a fearful impression upon some of the poor mites for whom they were intended

'Tis dangerous to provoke a God !  
His power and vengeance none can tell  
One stroke of his almighty rod  
Shall send young sinners quick to hell

Possibly children were formerly less sensitive and impressionable than they are to-day One hopes so, since for over a century this kind of literature was continually being thrust upon them There is a curious snobbishness that manifests itself in his work at times,

this last couplet obviously referring to the Rye House plot

A tiny, delightful little book on the art of writing, published "by the King's authority" in 1748, is prefaced with the following exhortation to the young penwoman, in a form which pays tribute to the influence of Pope

Ye springing Fair, whom gentle Minds incline  
To all that's curious, innocent and fine,  
With Admiration in your Works are read  
The various textures of the twining Thread  
Then let the Fingers, whose unrivall'd Skill  
Exalts the *Needle*, grace the noble *QUILL*  
An artless Scrawl the blushing Scribler shames,  
All should be fair that beauteous Woman  
frames

Strive to excel, with Ease the PEN will move,  
And pretty Lines add charm to infant LOVE

The copy from which this is taken is amusingly defaced with childish drawings scribbled in pencil on every available blank page. The faces are exactly like the faces drawn by small children to-day; the costumes are the costumes of the period. There is one delicious creature with hoops, a bodice with criss-cross lacing (which must have been very attractive to do), enormous ruffs on her sleeves and the most astonished eyebrows. Her name—Miss Trollop—is written beside her in faded ink. The

"blushing scribler" seems to have been incorrigible after all!

Another small book, published in 1771, contains a series of rhymes dealing with games; again with the inevitable moral tag attached. Thus, after a verse on marbles, we get:

Time rolls like a marble  
And cures every State,  
Then husband each moment  
Before 'tis too late.

It would seem as though writers, even when they felt a certain sympathy with childish preoccupations, were quite unable to dissociate the function of entertainment from those proper to the school-teacher and the preacher.

Ann and Jane Taylor, whose books of verse appeared at the very beginning of the nineteenth century, have recently suffered a very determined resuscitation. Some of their poems are charming, though they, too, are firmly set on the improvement of the young; but if one reads their entire output one is forced to the conclusion that their gift was a very limited one. The really attractive poems are rare. "The Cow" (Thank you, pretty cow. . .) is a pleasant little poem and has found a well-deserved place in many modern anthologies; but most of the other poems now make an

appeal more by reason of the light they throw on the manners and mentality of the times in which they were written than by their poetic quality. Latter-day children do not take very seriously the humiliations and retributions which befall these little Sophias and Anns and Matildas, but are inclined to be amused at them, which surely was the last thing intended by the rather self-consciously solemn young authors.

One of the most attractive of the poems—the one beginning

The dog will come when he is called,  
The cat will walk away—

was not, by the way, written by either Jane or Ann Taylor, but by Adelaide O'Keeffe, whose share in the making of the collection has been rather overlooked. The little group had countless imitators, who, in common with most of their kind, did the thing considerably less well.

About this time the cheap little paper-covered chap-books were produced in large quantities. Many of them contain narrative poems of the "*Cock Robin*" order, others, very poor rhyming versions of popular tales—"Tom Thumb," "Dick Whittington," "Jack the Giant-Killer" and the like. These

little books were not originally intended for children, but they were doubtless eagerly annexed and devoured by them. We get also more and more rhyming histories (one still comes across elderly people who remember their English dates that way), also rhyming grammars, music-books, arithmetics, and even astronomy books.

Another cluster glitters there,  
That, Emma, is the little bear.  
To-morrow night I have no doubt  
You'll quickly find those clusters out,  
And this you safely may expect  
If forms and names you recollect.

A good deal has been made of Charles and Mary Lamb's poems for children, but they have but little of the true child-like spirit; and even the familiar "Parental Recollections," one of the tenderest tributes to childhood ever penned, is not a poem *for* but *about* a child. Sara Coleridge also wrote a little book of "Pretty Lessons for young Children," which contains one amusing poem called "The Boy that won't lie in his Crib," of which one stanza runs:

The Ox is well pleased with his stall,  
The Sheep in their fold are quite cheerful,  
The Calf doesn't squabble and squall,  
He ne'er in his pen lets a tear fall.



The latter half of the book is taken up with rhymed "Lessons in Latin." A list of the titles of poems taken from books for children published in the first half of the nineteenth century gives some idea of the extraordinary unsuitability of subjects chosen for the young: "On the Death of a young Brother and Sister—Sonnet to Despair (beginning "Grim Monster of Tartarean birth—DESPAIR")—PASSION and its Consequences—Ruin and Success—The Blessing of Health—On a little Girl making her Brother's Shroud—The Execution (embellished with a woodcut of the scene)—Cannibals—Love, Death and Reputation—The conquest of Prejudice—Moderation in Diet—Improper Words . . ." the list could be indefinitely extended. But it is interesting to see how the idea of "Improvement" still persists, allied with that note of morbidity so characteristic also of the prose literature offered to children during that period.

But gradually there appeared among sensitive and thoughtful people a new attitude towards the child—a new perception of its needs—a new understanding of its mentality—a new desire to give full play to its individual characteristics and peculiarities—all this culminating in that active "cult of the child"

pursued to-day with an enthusiasm bordering on the feverish. This attitude may have been partly conditioned by, and has been inevitably reflected in, the books produced more latterly for the young. William Roscoe, the historian, in 1807 set the fashion for those realistic fantasies of animal life which appeal so strongly to the nursery: Kate Greenaway, whose sometimes quite delicious verse has been overshadowed by her more conspicuous talent in another direction, brought gaiety and simplicity into fashion; Stevenson opened the gates of his bright garden and showed to a delighted world the shining joys and pre-occupations of a child's mind; and Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll contributed their enchanting incongruities to the world's store of happy nonsense. Much has been gained; morbidity has gone; sermonizing has gone; condescension has all but vanished. All this is to the good; and yet when we look about for suitable poetry for children we find that the choice is not so very great after all.

Even in the nineteenth century "Poetry Books" were often dull and stereotyped affairs. Children read and recited without much enthusiasm such poems as "We are Seven," "The Psalm of Life," "The Wreck of the

Hesperus" (goodness knows why this last should have been considered so suitable<sup>1</sup>) and "The Pet Lamb." There is no reason why some of these should not be included in an anthology for children, but compilers to-day throw a much wider net, and it is encouraging to find that so many of the collections show an increasing avoidance of the sloppy-sentimental and the feebly-commonplace. Louey Chisholm's *Golden Staircase* (lately revised) is one of the best collections of this kind, and among the lesser ones a little volume called *Modern Verse for Little Children*, published by the Oxford University Press, is an excellent example of wise choice.

At the moment the output of verse for children is greater than ever, but though the attitude of mind of most writers has greatly improved, the actual performance is still often lamentably poor. The thing is so often done too carelessly, too casually, too *easily*. Still, a handful of writers have made a name in work of this kind. Walter de la Mare, who has written delicious child-verse, Humbert Wolfe, whose "Lilac" breathes the very freshness of spring, A. A. Milne, who has set half the world smiling and the other half imitating, Rose Fyleman, whose poems have the kind of

simplicity which is not achieved without taking much thought; Eleanor Farjeon, of the quaint fancies and delicate rhythms; and, in America, Rachel Field, who paints as gaily with words as with her brush. Other writers have given us, one here, another there, charming verses. Wilfrid Thorley, Elizabeth Rendall, Patrick Chalmers have all done attractive work, while other poets who usually write on more serious themes have from time to time written a delightful poem for a child. Here is, to finish with, a tiny poem by Christina Rossetti. Though we cannot quite count her among the moderns, her work for children is informed with the modern spirit of unaffected friendliness and sympathetic comprehension.

Boats sail on the rivers,  
 And ships sail on the seas;  
 But clouds that sail across the sky  
 Are prettier far than these.

There are bridges on the rivers,  
 As pretty as you please;  
 But the bow that bridges heaven,  
 And overtops the trees,  
 And builds a road from earth to sky,  
 Is prettier far than these.

Surely a model poem for a child.

## SAFETY FIRST

By Robert Lynd

"SAFETY First," says General Seeley in *Fear, and Be Slain*, "is a vile motto" There was surely never a more undeserved attack on a piece of ordinary common sense No one, so far as I know, has ever attempted to exalt the motto into a golden rule It is a saying chiefly used in order to encourage motorists not to run over pedestrians, to encourage pedestrians not to be run over by motorists, to encourage railway-travellers not to lean out of the window or to leave the train while it is in motion All these seem to me to be eminently desirable ends I have never yet heard even of a fire-eating admiral who inaugurated a society to teach people to drive, walk, and travel dangerously. No member of the A A has proposed to alter a well-known slogan into "When in doubt go fast" We do not attempt to nurture courage in the young by bidding them always cross the road before the traffic has stopped Nor has Eton, with

all the glorious traditions of its playing-fields, yet instructed its children to lean as far as possible out of the window when travelling in railway trains, and to make a point of jumping out while the train is in motion. I doubt if even General Seeley would recommend these courses as a necessary part of an education in bravery. He, too, believes in "Safety First" when it is common sense to believe in it.

It may be that the constant repetition of the phrase on hoardings and elsewhere has been misunderstood by the present generation, and that many people have come to regard it, not as a rule of behaviour in traffic, but as a complete philosophy of life. Possibly the post-war parent conceals from his infant the perilous example of Daniel in the den of lions. Instead of telling the story of David and Goliath, he may, for all I know to the contrary, be poisoning the nursery mind with a tale of a shepherd boy who, when his people were being destroyed by war, stuck cautiously to his sheep, avoided the battle zone, and lived to enjoy great riches. If this is so, then no doubt the boy who stood on the burning deck has fallen into disgrace—perhaps deservedly. It is melancholy to think that the Roman who leaped into the gulf may now be laughed at

in the nursery as a lunatic, and that Horatius Cocles may be held up to odium as a living negation of the commercial virtues

Not so was it when I was a child. In those days our little imaginations were stocked with saints and soldiers who had not enough business instinct among them to run a confectionery shop. A man could scarcely be too heroic for our greedy appetites. We had recitations about lifeboatmen, songs about firemen. A young girl, refusing to recant her faith and tied to a stake so that she might be drowned by the advancing tide, seemed not a fool, but a heroine to us. A missionary who landed on a South Sea Island only to be knocked on the head and put in a pot by black men who did not understand what he was talking about was an admirable fellow in our eyes. Death itself we were taught to regard lightly by the example of little Willie in the hymn which begins

"I would like to die," said Willie,

"If my papa could die, too."

With so many incitements to live dangerously ringing in our ears, indeed, it is surprising that most of us contrived to survive our teens.

And it was not only our parents and our nurses who egged us on towards the heroic

life. Our schoolfellows were in the same conspiracy. "Coward" was the name that we feared most, and even small girls could make a small boy who had offended them flush at the chanted chorus:

Cowardy, cowardy custard,  
Eat your father's mustard.  
Cowardy, cowardy carley,  
Eat your mother's barley.

With that vile song ringing in his ears many a nervous boy has retreated down the corridors of shame. And, to escape the imputation of cowardice, many a small boy has submitted to the lesser pain of a bleeding lip, a lost tooth or a discoloration of the flesh around his eye. On the football field, again, to be called a funk was worse than wounds. I myself as a rule did my best to assume the appearance of valour while secretly consulting my safety. But this was upon instinct and was not the result of a philosophy of "Safety First" instilled into me by my elders or my contemporaries. And, indeed, on the few occasions on which I forgot the possibilities of injury and flung myself recklessly into the maelstrom of the game, I experienced a happiness that makes me even now believe that courage must be the most intoxicating of all forms of pleasure. It may



be wondered why in that case I do not choose to live courageously. I can only say that I have not the slightest idea. I ought certainly to be a hero, for I was bred on heroic literature. Apart from the books that were put into my hands by my elders, I had early access to the noble exploits recounted in the innumerable pennyworths of the adventures of Deadwood Dick. If to make the heart beat faster over daring deeds is the mark of great literature, then surely the penny dreadfuls were great literature.

Looking back, I can see no reason in my bringing-up why I should have grown up a coward who prefers a comfortable bed to a martyr's bonfire, and who would rather listen to a chaffinch singing than win the Victoria Cross in a battle. Many people, while urging their children to dare to be Daniels, at the same time take every opportunity to prevent them from being so. They are brave in their generalizations, but in particular instances they counsel timidity. I do not remember ever having been prevented in this fashion from doing any brave deed upon which I was bent. I cannot remember, now that I come to think of it, ever having been seriously bent upon doing a brave deed. I was warned not to sit

down in wet shoes and stockings, but there is nothing conspicuously brave in sitting down in wet shoes and stockings. My aunts nervously forbade me to wander along the river-banks, but it was for no heroic purpose that I frequented the river-banks, but to gather water-lilies. In most other respects, I was exhorted to be a great deal braver than I was. I was encouraged to go to bed in the dark, to go upstairs in the dark, and was allowed to live largely in the company of other boys most of whom scarcely knew what fear was. Hence it cannot have been an inculcated philosophy of "Safety First" that tamed my spirit. Nobody whom I knew believed in "Safety First." I myself did not believe in it. I merely acted on it.

Perhaps, if my elders had kept drumming "Safety First" into my ears from my earliest infancy, the results would have been better. Perhaps, if they had done so, my natural love of contradiction would have triumphed, and out of sheer contrariness I should have become a hero. I, too, might have thought it a vile motto if anybody had said it to me. But, alas, even my nurse, as she gave me foul medicine in a spoon, always called on me to be a hero, a Trojan and a Stoic. And I rebelled—and am what I am.

## ONE OF THE MUGS

By A. P. Herbert

"WHAT is the consumer's point of view on the psychology of advertising?" I find that I have already answered this question in immortal verse

I'm constantly spoiling a Treasury note  
For those healthy tobaccos that cure a sore  
throat,  
Those magical systems that double your wits,  
And gargles and dopes for the nerves or the  
nuts

*I'm one of the mugs, you see,  
They're mainly invented for me  
If you want an infallible thing for the hair,  
Just look in the bathroom—they're all of them  
there,  
But you'll notice my innocent belfry is bare  
I'm one of the mugs Are you?*

Somebody asked me the other day. "Have you ever been persuaded to buy anything by an advertisement?" I looked into my secret soul and answered truthfully, and my answers revealed me in the meanest light. But if my

shame can do a service to British industry, I will confess readily.

I have, I find, responded frequently to the poster and the puff. Whenever I see that charming Miss Miranda Merry owes all her success upon the stage to "Vinovi," would never have survived the exhausting rehearsals for "Say When" but for a tablet or two of "Vinovi," I believe in "Vinovi" at once. And I have to be in very rude health to avoid sneaking into the next chemist's shop I pass for a ration of "Vinovi." If I had been a cigarette smoker I should certainly have fallen for those brands of cigarettes which not only were unaccompanied by sore throats but, if I remember right, rendered the smoker free from almost every bodily ill. Preparations which will prevent my going bald have an awful fascination for me, though, in truth, I have never yet bought one. If I am purchasing for a picnic, the name of a certain beef-extract rises naturally to my lips because its advertisements have tickled me for years, though I know of at least one other extract which seems to taste the same. I am not at all influenced by alcoholic advertisements in general, supplying my own stimulus in that department; but there is a certain brand of liquor which I take from time

to time, not because I like it, but because the hoardings have persuaded me that "it does me good "

So far, then (whatever my friends and enemies may say), the business man's psychological advisers have a fairly clear line on my sales-acceptance (if I may call it that) in relation to advertisement. I seem to have a health or well-being complex and unless a commodity will promise to improve my health, hair, digestion, intellect, or throat, it appears that you will advertise it in vain.

I fear that this is very nearly true. I have always had my favourites among the advertisers, but I can think of no others that have *moved me to buy*. I remember, in my youth, looking eagerly about London for new John Hassall posters—about gas-mantles, especially—"I bet that's a ——". I never bought a gas-mantle in my life, though, possibly, if I did, I should ask for a ——. I have long admired and applauded the Underground posters, but I swear that they have not induced me to spend a single extra penny on the Underground Railway (but then, I have always been an Underground fan). The advertisements of a certain petrol have made a strong impression on my mind, and I enjoy them, but I am still

unpersuaded that that petrol is better than any other, and I do not really care what petrol I pour into the engine of my boat. No doubt I am a mug—but there it is.

On the other hand, I have a friendly feeling towards that petrol, for its purveyors help to brighten our lives. And I feel kindly towards the Underground, and the gas-mantles and the beef-mixture mentioned already. And I suppose occasions may arise when this goodwill will give the advertisers value for their expenditure. I hope so.

Certainly there are advertisements which have the contrary effect upon me—which have what perhaps the psychological advisers would call a strong repulsion value. Sales discouragers. There is a firm which appears to sell nothing but engagement and wedding rings. They have impressed this upon me with pertinacity and success, and I have no doubt that their engagement rings are attractive and good. But their advertisements (to my mind) are not. Their advertisements have maddened me for years, and years ago I made a vow never to buy one of their rings. If I were an Eastern potentate taking a hundred new wives, they should all go ringless rather than wear one of these. I believe, if I were best man at a

wedding and I found that the ring was a —— I should refuse to harbour the thing in my waistcoat pocket.

Again, if I were dying on a desert island with but one pill between myself and eternity, and if that pill were one of those whose horrid names deface the fair fields of Britain as I pass them in the railway train, I believe I should fling the foul concoction from me and perish happily I am angered, too, by those few traders who print the names of their unimportant commodities upon the lovely sails of sailing-barges in the London River. There is a place for everything, and neither field nor coffee-coloured sail is the place for the names of pills, or even cement

And now the psychological advisers will begin to realize what problems they must tackle if they hope to tempt a perverse consumer like myself Even a good (as I think) and stylish advertisement does not always persuade me to buy and a bad, ugly, or offensive one arouses me to a fury of "sales-resistance."

I shall not, I think, be accused of any marked animosity against the brewers and distillers Yet in this connection I have one or two bones to pick with them Their methods of advertisement mystify me more than most.

Many of their posters are pleasing and effective (especially, I repeat, those which promise to do me good). But why must they deface our ancient inns with their gigantic names? Everywhere I read SMITH AND THOMPSON'S ALES in enormous letters and "The Blue Moon Inn" in tiny ones. The proportions are all wrong. Let the brewers study the outside of the Adelphi Theatre and take a lesson from Mr. C. B. Cochran in discreet and reticent advertisement.

Again, if I sit in a nice old bar-parlour, to which I have come, presumably, because I like both the inn and the refreshment, I do not want the name of a dozen different liquors to be shouted at me all the time. They are not shouted at me by the landlord, for landlords (contrary to the opinion of many temperance reformers) never persuade anyone to drink. But they are shouted at me by the brewers and distillers with innumerable little ugly plaques—*Somebody's Gin, So-and-so's Whisky, Somebody Else's Stout*. It is all in vain. The brewers have got me there, and I shall drink what I like, though floor and ceiling as well as walls implore me to drink something else. The plaques and things may not prevent me drinking, but they certainly do not make me



drink a drop more. They spoil the place and they annoy. And if they annoy me, what must be their effect upon a teetotaler?

It may well be that that is the only piece of practical advice this humble consumer can offer to the advertiser—*Don't be annoying!* He will answer that what annoys one of us delights another. I am not so sure. But it must be a hard life—I recognize that.

## WHAT NEXT ?

By Peter Fleming ("Moth")

THE poet Daniel (who pinched the idea from Bacon's essay *Of Empire*) once wrote :

“ The stars that have most glory have no rest.”

A passable conceit, you think, but not an ultimate truth? You are wrong. Take the case of the planet Venus. The planet Venus has been broadcasting.

You and I know very little about the stars. We always find, when we look up at the sky on a fine night, that there are rather more of them than we had bargained for : in this\* they are like whitebait. In fact, if we had to catalogue what we know about them (as opposed to what we feel) by compiling a list of adjectives, we should probably start with “ numerous.” We should then put down “ very small ”; but after a bit we should scratch out

\* And in this alone.

"very," and eventually "small" as well, in case people should find out about our not having read Sir James Jeans. After that we should be stuck. Our powers of accurate, scientific observation would be exhausted. We should be tempted to abandon a strictly descriptive for a suggestive method. Adjectives like "lovely," "inscrutable," "aloof"—adjectives which throw more light on Man than on his Universe—would be suppressed with the greatest difficulty. Then, just when it seemed that our analysis of fundamentals must end, as it began, with "numerous," it would occur to us that the stars—unlike, for instance, the sea—never make any noise; and we should put down "silent."

Here, it appears, we should be making a bad mistake. The stars are not silent. The planet Venus, as I say, has been broadcasting. The other day, with all America listening in, she emitted, *via* Washington Square, "a high sustained note like a violin note." As to how it was done, I am sure you will understand what I mean when I say that it was simply a matter of photo-electric cells and telescopes. Child's play. The important thing is that here you have a planet entering the field of public entertainment, making high-sustained notes into the

microphone like any hare-lipped warbler of folk songs, monopolizing the attention of the public as ruthlessly as any adenoidal analyst of Educational Reforms in Bosnia. It is a startling and, to my mind, a regrettable development. In the first place, it will involve all the heavenly bodies in a considerable loss of prestige. The qualities which we look for in a star—the qualities which automatically evoke adjectives like “lovely,” “inscrutable,” and “aloof”—will not be enhanced by hearing it make monotonous noises on the wireless; just as the qualities we look for in a bishop would not be enhanced by seeing him give an uneven performance in musical comedy. In the second place, it is clearly wrong that the bread should be taken out of the mouths of professional wireless entertainers by extra-terrestrial amateurs.

This last objection is a particularly cogent one. It is all very well to say that the competition from the stars cannot be so very formidable, because the stars are only audible when they are visible, and can therefore only perform at night, and in fine weather. The stars are not the only recruits to the microphone. On the evening on which the planet Venus made her *début*, (*The Times* says) “the sounds of objects were also broadcast. The

American flag made a noise like an orchestra without a conductor, and a cigar made a hoarse growling sound "

Now this is serious. If people are so easily amused that they are amused by this sort of thing, there is no telling where it will end. There are, of course, some objects which it would be genuinely interesting and instructive to listen to. The shrill, elusive titter of a collar-stud, for instance. the dull, mechanical booming sound given out by a copy of the *Spectator*. the clear, bell-like note of Stilton cheese. the Italian flag, which would presumably make a noise like a conductor without an orchestra. the savage roar of a pin. To such things as these, our curiosity would give a ready hearing.

At first the public would be all agog to hear what sounds were made by objects with which it was familiar. People would tune in eagerly to listen to a fruit salad, or an occasional table, or a bowler hat. But the number of such everyday objects, though large, is not unlimited. It would soon be exhausted, leaving a few Old Favourites firmly established in the public's approval. A new demand would spring up—a lust for novelty, an unhealthy craving for the noises made by remote, improbable

things. Those responsible for the wireless programmes would yield to it, and presently we should be hearing sounds recommended only by the fantastic nature of their origin. . . .

"Good evening, everybody. You are now going to hear what sort of noise it is that a celandine makes after it has been pressed between the pages of the London Telephone Directory. . . .

"Hallo, everybody. The sound you have just heard was emitted by a mole-skin waistcoat three days after it had been fired out of a cannon. The next item on the programme will be a pair of eighteenth century riding-boots full of Cape gooseberries. . . ."

But really, as I said before, there is no telling where it will end.

## PRICKINGS OF MEMORY

By "*Quex*"

ONE day recently, within the space of fifteen minutes, there happened to me that series of three which unquestioning believers in things beyond the ordinary range of knowledge are certain cannot be without definite import. The connection was with three separate, sensational shooting tragedies.

First came a telephoned invitation for the week-end, and the hostess added quickly that she knew me well enough to ask if I minded being one of a party that would include a man who in the war years shot another man, but was honourably acquitted of murder.

What I could remember of that case was in my mind when, ten minutes afterwards, going past Christie's, I saw walking on the opposite pavement a man who, not very long ago, was the central figure in a profoundly moving shooting drama. He underwent the ordeal of an emotional trial before being found Not Guilty of either murder or manslaughter.

This was a man that I knew and had talked with before grim tragedy affected his life. I would have stopped to speak, but his gaze did not turn my way. The width of King Street was between us. Each of us passed on.

In less than five minutes the third happening of the series had come to pass; and with the same casual unexpectedness. I was keeping an appointment in a block of offices in St. James's Street. I had thought simply of the street number. The name above the main entrance recalled swiftly that here—before the place was rebuilt, when it contained flats not offices—a violent love romance had its pitiful ending. A former Gaiety Girl, a beautiful, generous-hearted creature, who had queened it in the restaurants and gay haunts of well-dressed Bohemia, was shot dead by her lover, who then ended his own wasted, unhappy life.

I checked myself as I was about to say that this quick, unexpected succession of events provided a fascinating example of coincidence, revealed the curious, orderly workings of Chance. Then it came to me that had it not been for my retentive memory, there could have been no such series of happenings. It had indeed been the prickings of Memory that had created the apparent chain of coincidence.



One of the three tragedies I have mentioned gave the late Sir Edward Marshall Hall opportunity for one of his outstanding successes as an advocate. How often, though he has gone from us, does the name of Marshall Hall spring to the lips! I knew him well enough to dine with him occasionally, to receive notes from him telling me a piece of news or narrating some reminiscence or humorous story. In any gathering the drama, the sardonic humour, that he could introduce into his talk, the glowing nature of his revelations, made him an absorbing personality.

I remember a dinner party at the house of Colonel Percy Laurie, a Deputy Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. Lord Goschen, the late Sir Sydney Greville, Mr Seymour Hicks, all men with knowledge of life and affairs, were there, but as time went on we found ourselves listening to Marshall Hall alone.

That night he told of a weirdly strange incident in the life of the late Charles Brookfield, of a figure revealed behind a screen, of stinging, affrighting words used by Brookfield that sent a man out to death by his own hand.

I recall my very last evening with Sir

Edward. Walking through the Temple earlier in the day I had stopped to talk to him. When I mentioned that I thought of going that night to see a bit of strong drama at the Elephant and Castle Theatre, he said :

“Charles Gill and I often went out of the West End to see melodrama.” After which he added, rather to my surprise: “I’ll come with you.”

It was the right sort of night for South London melodrama. There was persistent rain. The Thames when we crossed it at Blackfriars looked black and cold. In the highest note of the wind that soughed through the by-streets near The Ring was a sound that caused us to laugh and say how like it was to the drawn-out “chee-i-ld” of full-blooded drama.

But there was cheerful talk before we started for the Elephant and Castle; and Sir Edward produced some carefully chosen cigars.

When Marshall Hall was a very young man he learned about cigars from the celebrated Mr. Dash of Brighton. When he was twenty-three he backed his selection of a certain brand by buying ten thousand of them, and did well enough out of the deal to retain two thousand of the cigars as his profit. “The worst thing

to do with a cigar," he observed that night, "is to dry it to death."

He talked of the opening days of the Savoy Hotel, when D'Oyly Carte told rising but not affluent members of the Beefsteak Club that there was a side door leading from the Strand into a secret chamber in London's new hotel de luxe where those in an inner circle of D'Oyly Carte's choosing could dine and wine at  $33\frac{1}{3}$  per cent less than they would have to pay in the restaurant. That room became, I suppose, the present Grill Room, where the charges are certainly not cut down by  $33\frac{1}{3}$  per cent.

Small children, be they of to-day or of Queen Anne's time, are the same. Kittens and small dogs are the same too. I don't believe that lovers of strong drama have changed either, though I am not sure about the actors and the acting. The company we saw at the Elephant and Castle did not mouth their lines, did not over emphasize, though they acted with immense spirit; and in team work they could give points to a good many West End companies. The play I saw with Sir Edward Marshall Hall was *The Flag Lieutenant*. As it was written by Major W. P. Drury and Mr. Leo Trevor, it had a literary flavour and a not

impossible plot. I believe that the night it was produced the takings amounted to only twenty-nine pounds. But a few nights afterwards Mr. Cyril Maude and the company were "commanded" to Windsor for King Edward's birthday; and financial success followed.

The drawback about *The Flag Lieutenant* as an Elephant and Castle play was that there was no villain, so we had no hissing. When, in the old-fashioned way, all the players, beginning with the light-footed parlourmaid, took individual calls, walking from wing to wing, there was nothing but applause, homely applause, in which a West End specialist, who sat with his family in one of the boxes, vociferously joined.

The line that earned most laughter followed the warning of the Admiral: "Let sleeping dogs lie," at which one of the comedians bawled out: "What about the cats?"

During the interval, the manager of the company asked Sir Edward and myself to come out and "take a smile." That, we found, meant alcoholic refreshment. As I learned afterwards, Sir Edward's last illness was then upon him. He had drunk mineral water during dinner. In the management's

private room at the theatre he compromised by taking a tot of gin and soda

The presence in the audience of the famous advocate had quite excited the players We had to go round at the back to see the leading actor, Mr Slaughter, in his dressing-room He told us that he and the company had built the battleship used in the last act, "the contractors wanted ninety pounds," he said, "we did it for sixteen pounds"

The leading lady gave Sir Edward a button-hole from the bouquet handed her by the conductor of the band, undoubtedly she meant it as a compliment when she told him that she herself had waited for hours in the queue outside to get a place in Court and hear him conduct one of his cases

One of Sir Edward's earliest Court appearances was at Barking It was a minor case, but his client insisted on driving him from London to Barking in a carriage and pair Young Marshall Hall won his case When he and his client came out of Court a large crowd gathered in the street cheered them

"I can't understand the interest in this case," said Marshall Hall "There's only 7s 6d involved"

"Yes," replied his client, "but a devil

of a lot of money has been betted on the result."

When he was engaged in the Russell case, Sir Edward went to bed every evening at six p.m. to read over the documents and to make sure of a long rest each day. He told me once, after he had been to Kissengen for an overhaul, that a doctor in that health resort said that his health was good, but that he was an air-eater.

"He explained," said Sir Edward, "that I spoke so fast I gulped in the air at too rapid a rate."

Sometimes I reflect upon the British habit of reticence which prevents us praising a man when he is alive; at any rate, to his face. I think of that habit of reticence when I reflect that no longer in clubs, and at private gatherings can we look upon that tall form, note that glance, which was as impressive in private talk as it was in the dramatic surroundings of the Courts, and listen to the finely modulated tones of that compelling voice. Marshall Hall is gone, and never can he know the admiration and affection some of us would like to have expressed to him in spoken words.

# THE MAD MAMMAL

By Arthur Machen

*First Critic* "To me civilization is a matter of sewage"

*Second Critic* "those who to-day tend more and more to feel that every aspiration and every hope of man is a logical absurdity"

THESE are two recent pronouncements. I believe that there is a link between them, and it may be entertaining to look for it.

To begin with the First Critic, it should be explained that he was criticizing. Someone had written a book, a book that touched on music, and the author ventured the opinion that the work of Mozart and Beethoven was the very summit and touchstone of civilization. Here, he seemed to say, is the purest, the highest, the finest thing that man can do: in a word, civilization, as contrasted with brutishness. Our critic proclaimed his resolute negative. Not music, he said, nor sculpture, nor architecture make civilization: for me it is a matter of sewage. And I presume that we may include with music, architecture, and sculpture, painting and literature, though these last

are not specified. And a liberal spirit of interpretation will collect under the term sewage everything that makes for the well-being of the human body, every method and every measure that prolong human life.

I don't think that the position has ever been stated so clearly. Everybody in his senses agrees that physical well-being is highly desirable. Nobody that I have ever heard of has argued that the chief instance of the ancient culture of Athens was the Plague; or that we should praise the Middle Ages not so much for the cathedrals or the Arthurian romances, or the *Divine Comedy*, as for the Black Death. And it would be over-hardy to maintain that the Great Plague of London added much to the merriment of the Restoration period.

Evidently, we all want to live as long as possible, and to be as well as possible. An explorer or an archæologist may say that he is willing to risk catching malaria, even in a bad form, for the sake of making drawings of those sculptures or ascertaining the exact source and course of that river: but he would be much happier if "sewage" in one form or another had abolished the disease.

The case for sewage, then, is proved completely. But two questions arise.



Having got our sewage into the most perfect state possible. having eliminated disease having found out the complete secret of nutrition having made wars to cease throughout the world having reduced accidents and disasters to a minimum having adjusted the social complex in such a manner that poverty and its result, ill-nourished bodies, have ceased to exist what are we to do next? John Stuart Mill saw the difficulty and thought, I believe, that man would chiefly occupy himself in reading Wordsworth. But our Critic has swept away the arts. He has declared that they count for nothing. We are perfectly healthy, we have every expectation of living to a hundred, perhaps to a hundred and fifty. But what are we to do with ourselves?

That is the first question. The second is how is it that taking the human race as a whole, going back to the remotest ages, surveying with *Dr Johnson the world from China to Peru*, how is it that men have entirely failed to follow that course which the Critic says is the only rational course? It is not that they have been unaware of the benefits of sound health and long life. These have always been recognized as good things. Of course, men have differed as to the means to attain those ends

We send for the plumber: Black Africa sends for the witch doctor; Mediaeval man, very likely, sent for the liver of a black dog, torn out under the full moon: on the whole, I suppose that our way is the best. But the end, physical well-being, is the same in each instance.

And yet, man has from the beginning been hugely addicted to the arts; that is, a seeker after beauty. There is no race so primitive or so rude that it does not scratch some sort of a pattern on the bowl from which it eats its dinner; the cavemen painted images on the walls of their cave: there were songs about the earliest camp-fires; and some of our nursery tales were first told by peoples that had perished long before history began. And so it has gone on, ever since, a great pageant of music, painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry, philosophy. How is this? What happened to man at the beginning?

Here, I believe, we discover the link between our two Critics. The second Critic suggests that every aspiration, every hope of man, is an absurdity.

Very good. What should we say, if we saw a swallow trying to gather honey from flowers, and a bee endeavouring to sustain nature on midges; a cat with a violin, in an effort to

realize the old rhyme, and a cow, not jumping over the moon, but attempting the art of modelling in mud? I suppose we should say—before we ran—that the creatures were mad, that the beast creation had become maniacal, in other words, that all their hopes, all their aspirations, were absurdities

And so, combining our information, placing the dictum of the First Critic beside that of the Second, we arrive inevitably at our definition of man—the Mammal that went mad. The monkey, being sane, gibbers, chatters, and screams, his distant cousin, man, being mad, writes poems and romances, and composes music. The clear-headed animal has neither aspirations nor hopes, or, or least, only such as are rational and easily realized. Man, with his wits all addled, is full of hopes and aspirations, all of them, it seems, logical absurdities. It is evident that if we grant the premises, the conclusion is inevitable, man is a maniac.

Here, at all events, we have a plausible explanation of what has always seemed to me a tremendous puzzle. We accept the doctrine of science in its authentic form. We are not descended from the apes, as the loose talk ran, but the apes and ourselves come from a common ancestry. Then, at some point in the

tremendous past, one set of hairy creatures began to behave in an extraordinary manner. There are people, I believe, who think that the queerness of the divergent stock first appeared in its renunciation of the vegetarian diet that had hitherto been the habit of the whole race; and it must be said, in all fairness, that many amiable and enlightened persons of the present time would regard Meat and Madness as almost in the relation of cause and effect. Then, perhaps, the differentiated race learned how to cook. Again, we must admit that some eminent physicians of to-day inform us with authority that to cook our food is to destroy its food value; that we shall never be well, either in body or mind, unless we put out the kitchen fire. And a third step, very possibly, may be symbolized by the Greek mythos of Dionysus, or Bacchus, who civilized men, as the ancients said, by teaching them the strange uses of the vine. We know too well what some of the best people have to say about that step in our career; our mad career, if our two Critics are to be believed. And, after Dionysus had taught our forefathers what to do with the vine, we may well suppose that hopes and aspirations and unimaginable dreams, and all the arts which are born of them, came as a water-

flood on this new creature, this transformed mammal. At last, he was Man and Mad

It is interesting, I think, to note, as I have noted, the coincidence that may be traced between the old legends and the new science, nay, between these legends and the most modern, the most advanced political thought. You remember how Don Quixote, sitting among the goatherds, took a handful of acorns—it must be confessed they were parched—and delivered his eulogy of the Golden Age

Happy the age, happy the time, to which the ancients gave the name of golden—because they that lived in it knew not the two words, *mine* and *thine*! In that blessed age all things were in common, to win the daily food no labour was required of any save to stretch forth his hand and gather it from the sturdy oaks that stood generously inviting him with their sweet, ripe fruit. The clear streams and running brooks yielded their savoury limpid waters in noble abundance. The busy and sagacious bees fixed their republic in the clefts of the rocks and hollows of the trees, offering to every hand without usance the plenteous product of their fragrant toil

And so forth, and so forth.

Communism, raw acorns, cold water, bee-stings, and wild honey: it must have been almost as nice as modern Russia. And it is practically identical with the nonsense with which Rousseau deluded the world

## STREET-MUSIC

*By V. Sackville-West*

WHEN I was young, I attended a drawing-class. It was not by my own choice that I attended it, but by that of my parents. For my own part I knew all too well that I could not draw, never would be able to draw, and had no wish to do so. My parents thought otherwise. They were wrong, and I, for once, was right. I learnt that only one eye was visible in a profile, not two, and that was about as far as I got.

My memories of the drawing-class, however, are distinguished in my mind for quite a different reason. The class took place in London on Tuesday afternoons, and regularly every week at four o'clock an old man used to pass down the street playing a flute. The misery of trying to sharpen my piece of charcoal, which always snapped, was alleviated by the anticipation of those quavering and reedy notes. The pipes of Pan were never more sweet to prisoner, nor the downward rush of Perseus

to a chained Andromeda. For it was summer, and the windows stood open to the warm, unlovely street, I pined for the country, the hay-fields, and the brooks, while the mistaken authority of my parents pinned me to London as firmly and as cruelly as the drawing-pins secured my unfortunate sheet of paper to the board. With the first distant notes of the flute came release. Satyrs danced and lambs gambolled in the London squares, the houses sank into the earth, and in their place rose stately trees and green glades flushed with fox-gloves. Pure as dripping water came the notes of the flute, though I daresay they may have been a little out of tune. No matter: they have left me a legacy of eternal gratitude to street-music.

Yet there are men with souls so dead that they put up notices saying, "No hawkers or musicians," and the flautist and the organ-grinder turn sadly away. Not for them the harvest of charity from those prosperous and stuccoed houses with lace blinds in the windows. Did they presume to disregard the notice, a squadron of indignant butlers would instantly emerge from those Doric porticoes with threats of the police. So they depart, to bestow their gift on humbler citizens who will,

in gratitude, throw them pence from an upper balcony.

Perhaps I romanticize. I daresay that sharp-nosed spinsters chase the itinerant musician away from the dreariest street of boarding-houses as effectually as the butler chases him from the residences of the rich. And indeed there is music and music. Even I would gladly suck a lemon in front of a German band. Nor do I care overmuch for the cracked harmonium or the violin with one note missing, and least of all for the doleful human voice. But I would like to put in a plea for the barrel-organ, the concertina, and the flute. They have a double quality, the quality of London or any great city, and the quality of the South. They are reminiscent of all the tunes we have heard in slummy backwaters and of all the tunes we have heard in the backwaters of Venice and Naples. They may be cheap, they may be sentimental—and so, no doubt, they are—but with their tinkling jingle they have the power to revive our youthful and romantic associations. Was there not once a young Italian officer who strummed on his mandolin under our moonlit window in Venice, intoning meanwhile the stanzas of “*La musica proibita*” in his rich tenor voice? And was he



not in love with us at the time? or, at any rate, imagined himself to be so? Did he not offer us an ancient name, and a palace into the bargain? "*La musica proibita*,"—forbidden music! What music could be sweeter? What, indeed, but that even more innocent music of the old flute-player passing down the street on a warm summer afternoon, while a dozen little girls with pig-tails tried to draw an old man or a young woman in profile, their attention distracted by the frail piping outside, which then held all the promise of the future, and now holds all the melancholy of the past?

# THE ART OF REJECTION

## A NOTE ON TASTE

By John Gore ("The Old Stager")

**H**OW the professionals shoulder out the amateurs in a garden! Like Adam after the Fall, I stand on the fringe of my acres while a broad-beamed angel with a shining spade cries: "Hold!", and bends his back contemptuously to repair the ravages of my afternoon's trenching.

I am suffered to mow the remoter patches of lawn, without guarantee that they will not be "run over" again; I may cart dung, pick stones, scythe nettles, roll and weed. And in weeding I get my revenge.

Of all the joys that gardening brings to men, weeding is first and best. It appeals to what is noblest and deepest in human nature. It satisfies a man's healthy energy and his love of order, and at the same time it assuages his lust to destroy. To draw the dock up through the stubborn earth till the tapering end of the

long root comes clear away at last and the soil is rid for ever of one more fell rascal, to wrench up the nettle and its bruised runners, to extract the bleeding sucker of the dandelion, these barbarities appeal to the savage in me, just as my highly civilized and better self rejoices to rake level the soil round neatly ordered plants, freed once more from parasite and pest

But with the tares too often I gather up good wheat For my garden is the work of many hands applied energetically but spasmodically, and, wooden labels being vagrant signposts, children children all the world over, and children's pets garden pests to the last bantam, too often I reap untimely what another sowed

Indeed in the past year I have rivalled Jack Horner in the pulling out of plums They are dead now, these rarities, and their Latin names are better forgotten The very weeds they died with, bear the names of Kings

Nor need I make apology. In the art of weeding I am in horticulture the peer of Thomas Gray in literature. Gray weeded out of his *Elegy*, for good and sufficient reason, perhaps the four loveliest consecutive lines in poetry

Here scattered oft, the earliest of the year,  
 By hands unseen, are showers of violets found;  
 The red breast loves to build and warble there,  
 And little footsteps lightly print the ground.

And I have rid my garden of innumerable treasures not less rare.

Happy in my hobby, I can and do pursue it all day long. When the sun shines, I weed my garden; and when the weather or my back breaks, I retire to my room and weed my manuscripts, which are choked with parasites—to every plant or noun a couple of adjectives where one or none would be better. Nor can I decide which form of weeding I love best.

This art of rejection is indeed the chief, the decisive, factor of good taste in the work of men's hands if not in Nature. You may approve a riot in Nature but not in Art. Style is but simplicity and relevancy; and simplicity is the first attribute of true greatness. Nor can taste be unexceptionable where sentiment, irrelevancy and redundancy have not been pruned away.

In theory I deprecate ridiculing the taste of others, in practice I find myself compelled to it whenever I hire a furnished house. And that is my fate once a year. For it is an article of faith, which no father single-handed will ever

shatter, that the children (in which term are comprised the nurses) must have their month at the seaside.

Year after year, therefore, I resume my weeding among crewel-work mats and china ornaments in alien drawing-rooms, I note with keen appreciation where poker-work brackets support objects of little intrinsic merit, and I fail not to applaud the artistic genius which sets a print of "The Soul's Awakening" as pendant to a life-sized enlargement of the founder of the house in mutton-chop whiskers and black broadcloth partially relieved by the regalia of the Ancient Order of Buffaloes.

Yet there are good grounds for doubt and diffidence. Who shall say with certainty why he banks his hope of Heaven on the belief that a poker-work bracket, nailed into a wallpaper of purple roses and supporting a pink and gilt china cup with its legend "A Present from Ilfracombe," is no suitable decoration for any dining-room? Why so certain that a group of naked cupids in bronze bearing up a cornucopia in whose base the dial of a clock is set, is not, even if the clock work, the best method of giving the time of day? Or that a china pear, rotten, hollow and very life-like, half revealing a china mouse within, the whole

enclosed by a glass dome, is redundant on the grand piano? And why does a certain type of glass chandelier morbidly suggest a dentist's waiting-room no less surely than does an ancient copy of *The Spur* or *Puck*? If the art of furnishing be to create an atmosphere of cheerfulness—and that is no despicable objective—the pink cup may well recall a honeymoon or the happiest of holidays; but if utility be the criterion of taste, those glass chandeliers—or their originals—were designed for an age when the faint light of candles must be reflected and enhanced. Is it, then, because its usefulness is passed that an object ceases to be in good taste and must be rejected? By no means; for people of unimpeachable taste in our day pay large sums for unstable chairs of the age of Anne, for snuff-boxes and even for warming pans. A thousand such unprofitable speculations arise the worse to confound the confusion of our minds.

Who shall convince me that the Cavalry Memorial has greater or less merit than the Cavell? Each in turn has seemed to me a deplorable atrocity. I have been lashed to revolt from the Rima panel and tutored in youth into contempt for the Albert Memorial. I came to admire by tradition rather than free

choice above all equestrian statues Le Sueur's Charles I. At James II I have laughed till my ribs cracked and heard myself hailing him the noblest Roman of them all I have in truth no convictions left me, if I ever had any worth the name. Good taste is nothing but the ephemeral opinion of a resolute Cabal in the human herd, whose outward confidence cloaks their own, and chokes their neighbour's, doubts

It was unexceptionable, I recall, to sit on summer evenings on those silly little green chairs near Achilles Statue, until Suburbia with its millions drove away the devoted minority

And Duchesses found nothing in better taste for ceremonial wear than black satin—until Mrs Manning, a perfect lady to the end, elected to be hanged in black satin. For the taste of Mayfair must never coincide with that of Surbiton, nor Chelsea's with South Kensington's, and it follows that in our mortal dread of the Olympian minority we are cowardly and inconstant sheep, one and all

That all tastes are good is a generous and sound maxim, followed through life, it brings enjoyment in its train. Indeed, their name is legion who, laughing-stock for the gods, banish from life much innocent pleasure, in doubt of what they may enjoy

Sure it is, whatever your taste to-day, it is the final word in artistic refinement—and a few years hence will be radically revised. An assured good taste goes hand in hand with a defective memory. You forget (because you must) the bustles, the flounces and the mutton-chop sleeves of your pretty young aunts; you dare not recall that, when Albert and Victoria skied the Gainsboroughs to show the Winter-halters, two brief generations passed before Mr. Strachey came forward to poke fun at the solecism.

*Redit et Victoriæ regnum!* In æsthetics as in gardening, the art of rejection must stop short of uprooting those common herbs best loved in youth and freshly remembered. Henceforward I shall bravely cherish my maple frames, and you your pink memory of Ilfracombe—and be damned to all giggling lessees.

What then is good taste? And what for that matter is truth?

A small boat at the mercy of the winds and waves.

Some call the boat falsehood and the sea truth; Others the boat truth and the sea falsehood.

How right was Pilate in his philosophic doubt. Can even the professional gardener distinguish the rare plant among the weeds?



## AVE ATQUE VALE

*Anonymous*

IT needs a brave man to trespass individually against a well-established social custom, and an even braver to wage open warfare upon a convention to which whole nations own allegiance. A well-known Correspondent of *The Times*, now travelling in the Far East, has the necessary courage. He has recently suggested the severe restriction, if not the total abolition, of the handshake of Western civilization. He detests "the clammy grasp of outstretched hands," and longs to devise some way of greeting the coming and speeding the parting guest "without an exchange of perspiration." And, as if he had not already taken on enough for one pair of hands, this hardy reformer additionally sets his face against the "highly unhygienic" practice of kissing lips or lipstick, as the case may be. It is sheer quixotism to add a campaign against this double-faced, but highly popular, practice. He will have all his work cut out to get rid of

the handshake. A whole body of literary and artistic opinion will be against him. How keenly the vivid writer would miss the firm, bone-crushing clasp which betrays the great heart of the strong but silent hero! Never again could the paladin of the wild and woolly West say: "Put it there," or, more simply: "Shake." And what would the caricaturist of social foibles do if there were no shaking of hands at ridiculous heights and impossible angles to be drawn?

Nevertheless the reformer will not go single-handed on his crusade. There will be support for his physical distaste in the embarrassments of the socially untutored and the shy. In the awkward moment of introduction, for instance, should the handshake be bestowed always and upon all and sundry? If so, should it be firm and hearty, or modest and retiring? If not, where does one draw the line? And what replaces it; a polite bow from the waist, a brief nod, or a stony stare? And by what words, if by any, should it be accompanied? "Pleased to meet you" may be true, but has yet to win its way to the topmost shelf. "How do you do?" is the easy and usual formula; but then what, if any, is the answer of the man who is unlucky enough not to get

in first? To answer nothing seems boorish. To reply fervently "I am very well, thank you. And you?" would be gracious, but might be disconcerting. The wise man will

- \* try to synchronize the question with his opponent and be happy to call it a tie. Parting is not quite so difficult. An unhesitating handshake will not be taken to mean greater pleasure in going than in coming. But there may still be problems. In bidding farewell to a roomful, what is the limit to the number of handshakes due, and what is to be the consolation prize for those who actually miss but metaphorically receive the "frozen mitt"? For accompanying speech an unadorned "Good-bye" is the safest and easiest libretto. The over-hearty "Cheerio" and the cryptic "So long" may be written off as the extravagances of a special age, class, or shade of intimacy, and should not be debited to the general account.

Life would be simple indeed if there were no more serious problems than these about the technique of greetings and good-byes. But it is precisely in dealing with the changes and chances of life itself that the manner of meeting and parting becomes a serious question. A man may be known by the way in which

he does either. We all number in our list of friends some who visibly blench when anything troublesome or difficult appears on their horizon. They are on the run before ever they come into contact with what they dread. At the most they will seek diligently for some way round it, or will bury scared heads in the sand of a feigned unawareness weakly hoping that the peril will pass them by. And we know others who are always ready to "greet the unseen with a cheer," to look crisis full in the face, and to pluck daring out of the very jaws of danger. There is no doubt which manner of greeting compels our admiration and devotion, whether or not it wins the suffrages of the gods on whose knees lies the lot of men. Parting is no less stern a testing time. There is so much to which we must say good-bye in this mortal life. Not perhaps in the earlier years, when the rosy hours crowd in on the young life with full hands eager to give. But as time goes on the bright advance fades into grey retreat, and the eyes of the ageing man are turned more and more persistently backward on what has gone. "Longum nihil nisi vale" is the thought that he finds it hard to check. It is then that he will show what manner of man he is. Will he spend the

little time that is left to him in vain regrets, and in the bitterness of complaint that all things are taken from him and become "Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past"? Or will he be happy in the thought of what has been, and grateful that life has had in it so much that was bright and gracious beyond all that he had the right to ask? He has still to face the final farewell:

Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible  
form,

Yet the strong man must go

In that ultimate pass it is worth everything to remember that "Good-bye" may be not only "Adieu" but also "Au revoir"

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